

Volume 2

ŚRĪ RĀMA CARITA MĀNĀSA
of
Gōswāmī Tulasīdās

Canto 2: Ayodhyā-Kāṇḍa

Original Text, English Transliteration &
Exhaustive Exposition in English with Explanatory Notes

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Language: English.

NOTE:

This English rendering of the epic Book 'ŚRĪ RĀMA CARITA MĀNĀSA' of Goswami Tulsidas is in 7 Volumes.

The present volume no. 2 has the Second Canto of the Book: viz. Ayodhya Kand.

The rest of the volumes in this series are as follows:-

Volume 1: Ram Charit Manas, Canto 1: Baal Kand

Volume 3: Ram Charit Manas, Canto 3: Aranya Kand

Volume 4: Ram Charit Manas, Canto 4: Kishkindha Kand

Volume 5: Ram Charit Manas, Canto 5: Sundar Kand

Volume 6: Ram Charit Manas, Canto 6: Lanka Kand

Volume 7: Ram Charit Manas, Canto 7: Uttar Kand

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Contents of Volume 2: Ayodhyā-Kāṇḍa

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2. The TEXT of ŚRĪ RĀMA CARITA MĀNASA, Ayodhyā-Kāṇḍa :
– Page: 1923 – 3069.

CHAPTER 5.2:

Ayodhyā-Kāṇḍa

Original Text in Hindi + English Transliteration + Exhaustive Exposition in English with Explanatory Notes:—

(1) Invocation : Shloka line nos.1-4

(2) King Dasrath realized he was getting old, and so decided to anoint Lord Ram as the next King of Ayodhya; Lord Ram informed of the decision by sage Vasistha; rejoicing in the city as this news spread : Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 1—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 11.

(3) The gods want Lord Ram to go to the forest instead, so that the main purpose of the Lord's manifestation as a human being, which was to eliminate the scourge of the tyrannical demons led by their ferocious king Ravana, could be successfully accomplished; so the gods tweak the mind of queen Kaikeyi by using her trusted maid Manthara as a medium to accomplish their goal; Kaikeyi prevails upon her husband, king Dasrath, to grant her two boons under oath—one was to send Lord Ram to the forest, and the other was to appoint her own son as the King of Ayodhya; the king was devastated by this demand, and he lamented most woefully : Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 11—to Doha no. 37.

(4) The kingdom's chief minister, named Sumantra, informed Lord Ram that king Dasrath wants to meet him; Lord Ram is apprised of the developments by Kaikeyi; the Lord cheerfully and willingly accepted the demand; as the news spread, the citizens were shocked; they scorned and derided Kaikeyi for her wickedness : Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 38—to Doha no. 51.

(5) Lord Ram seeks his mother Kaushalya's permission to proceed to the forest; Sita and Laxman decide to join the Lord : Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 52—to Doha no. 76.

(6) King Dasrath made a last ditch attempt to dissuade Lord Ram and Sita from going to the forest, but they did not relent; Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman depart from Ayodhya on their way to the forest; the grief-stricken citizens follow them; Dasrath asks Sumantra to take a chariot and go with the Lord for some distance, and then try to bring him back; Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman board the chariot, and after spending the first night on the banks of river Tamsa, they reach Sringeripur : Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 77—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 87.

(7) Lord Ram meets and befriends Nishad, the chief of the boatman community; the next morning Sumantra pleaded with Lord Ram to return home, conveying to him and Sita Dasrath's emotional message; Lord Ram politely declined and asked Sumantra to turn back; then the Lord, accompanied by Sita, Laxman and Nishad, cross the river Ganges after blessing the boatman who took them across : Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 88—to Doha no. 102.

(8) Lord Ram and his companions arrive at Prayag; then the Lord visits sage Bharadwaj's hermitage; the conversation between the Lord and the sage : Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 103—to 108.

(9) Departure from Bharadwaj's hermitage; the news of the passage of Lord Ram through the countryside spread like wildfire, and every single soul who heard came rushing to meet and get blessed by the Lord's presence; there was a mixture of joy and exhilaration at this privilege as well as of sadness and grief at the sufferings that the Lord, Sita and Laxman would have to bear in the forest; when the Lord reached river Yamuna, he asked Nishad to return home : Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 109—to Doha no. 123.

(10) Lord Ram arrives at sage Valmiki's hermitage; conversation between the sage and the Lord during which Valmiki outlines the symbolic holy places where Lord Ram should live : Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 124—to Doha no. 132.

(11) On the advice of sage Valmiki, Lord Ram arrives at Chitrakoot to abide there for some days : Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 133—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 142.

(12) Meanwhile, Sumantra returned to Ayodhya and informed king Dasrath of the developments; Dasrath lamented and grieved sorrowfully, and died in shock of separation from Lord Ram which was too much for him to cope with : Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 142—to Doha no. 156.

(13) Bharat and Shatrughan were informed by messengers sent by sage Vasistha; Bharat returns home and learns of the wicked deed of his mother; he strongly rebuked and upbraided her; then he performs the last rites of his father; a royal conference was held where the seniors tried to persuade Bharat to accept the crown in the absence of Lord Ram, but he refused, saying that he wants to go to the forest and ask for forgiveness from the Lord besides requesting him to come back home; this endeared Bharat to every single person in Ayodhya : Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 157—to Doha no. 185.

(14) After making proper preparations, Bharat departed for the forest to meet Lord Ram; he was accompanied by a huge precession of seniors and ordinary folks of Ayodhya; the party reached Sringeripur where Bharat met and befriended Nishad who too joined him and acted as a guide for the onwards journey to where Lord Ram was in the forest : Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 186—to Doha no. 202.

(15) Bharat arrives at sage Bharadwaj's hermitage; conversation between the two; the sage lavishly entertains Bharat and his entourage; departure of Bharat from the sage's hermitage for his onwards journey to Chitrakoot : Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 203—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 216.

(16) The fear of the gods and their guru's reassurance to them; the emotional response that Bharat received from the country folk; his arrival at Chitrakoot and meeting Lord Ram : Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 216—to Doha no. 240.

(17) Lord Ram meets and welcomes everyone accompanying Bharat most affectionately; the Lord escort them all inside his hermitage; the first conference at Chitrakoot where Bharat pleads his case before Lord Ram : Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 241—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 270.

(18) Arrival of king Janak with his entourage; Sita meets her parents who praise her; the conversation between Janak and his wife Sunayana : Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 270—to Doha no. 289.

(19) The second conference at Chitrakoot; Lord Ram persuades Bharat to honour their father's words and bear with the Lord till the end of the designated time the Lord is obliged to stay in the forest; Bharat accepts Lord Ram's commands, but asks the Lord to tell him where to place the consecrated waters of different holy places he had brought along in order to anoint Lord Ram as a King in the forest itself; Lord Ram told him to follow the instructions of sage Atri in this regard : Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 290—to Doha no. 309.

(20) Sage Atri advises Bharat to place all holy waters in a well nearby; Bharat goes on a tour of the holy sites of Chitrakoot; the third conference at Chitrakoot; Bharat accepts Lord Ram's instructions to return home; he accepts the Lord's wooden footwear as a token of his personal presence at Ayodhya, and prepares to return home : Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 310—to Doha no. 316.

(21) Bharat and his entourage leave Chitrakoot with a very heavy heart to return to Ayodhya; arrival in the gloomy city; Bharat puts Lord Ram's sandals on the throne as a token of the Lord's personal presence, and himself retires to lead a hermit's life at a nearby suburb; Bharat's exemplary life of renunciation and detachment praised lavishly by one and all : Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 317—to 326.

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ŚRĪ RĀMA CARITA MĀNASA
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Gōswāmī Tulasīdās

Canto 2: Ayodhyā-Kāṇḍa

Preface

In the previous Canto no. 1, i.e. ‘Baal Kand’, we have read the Story of “Ram Charit Manas” till the point of time when the marriage party returned to Ayodhya with Lord Ram and his brothers along with their respective brides, celebrations in the city, and then, after passage of some time, sage Vishwamitra took leave of king Dasrath and went back to his hermitage.

In the present Canto no. 2, i.e. ‘Ayodhya Kand’, we move ahead with the Story. Some days passed in a routine manner, when one day king Dasrath, realizing that old age was creeping upon him, finally decided to formally anoint his eldest son, Lord Ram, as the Regent, a Crown Prince and official Heir of the kingdom.

Everything would have been fine but for the fact that Lord Ram was not an ordinary human being born as a prince of a great kingdom, to grow up and inherit his father’s kingdom and legacy; for the Lord was a human manifestation of the Supreme Being who had come down to earth with a special objective, which was to eliminate the scourge of the savage demons ruled by their ruthless king named Ravana, who had unleashed a relentless and vicious campaign of cruelty, barbarity and torment in this world. So, simply ascending the throne and becoming a great king was not on the agenda of Lord Ram, for he had other important things to do. But it was imperative to keep the truth of his identity as being the Supreme Being secret, lest the demons would get alarmed and either go hide somewhere, or come to seek forgiveness from the Lord, knowing fully well that if they surrendered then the merciful Lord would be obliged to accommodate them in spite of all their evilness and vile nature, though such show of repentance and regret by the cunning demons would only be an excuse to survive, and much sooner than later they would revert to their bad old ways once the immediate danger was over.

Lord Ram weighed all the pros and cons, and decided that he must go ahead with his mandate, without further loss of time. To give effect to his plans he had to find a way to go to the forest, because it was here the demons resided and attacked humble ascetics and hermits, involved in spiritual practices, with impunity, and then the Lord would have to go to their den in Lanka itself to completely route the evil from its base, as Lanka was the epicenter of terror and abode of demon-barbarians.

Hence, the Lord subtly hinted to the Gods, who were eagerly waiting for his instructions, to devise a device and take necessary steps in this direction, as they thought fit and expedient under the prevailing circumstances.

Thence, the Gods requested goddess Saraswati, the patron goddess of speech and wisdom, to please use her wits and maneuver things in such a way that Lord Ram could go to the forest with his wife Sita and brother Laxman in order to carry out the main mission for which he had to take the trouble of coming to earth and becoming a human being to endure all the suffering that a human being has to bear with. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 11—to Doha no. 12.}

Accordingly, Saraswati decided to play a spoil-sport and stop king Dasrath from going ahead with his plans to anoint Lord Ram as the future king of Ayodhya. How did she manage it? Well, she knew the weak point in Dasrath's character, that he was so passionately involved with one of his queens, named Kaikeyi, that if the latter was made an instrument to give effect to the Master Plan of the Gods, Dasrath would succumb like a pack of cards. Therefore, Saraswati corrupted the mind of Manthra, a favourite maid of Kaikeyi and her close confidante, who in turn corrupted her mistress Kaikeyi, telling her many things that would happen against her interests in future if Lord Ram ascended the throne. What were her arguments and predictions, though absolutely without any ground and truth, that moved Kaikeyi to commit an error of judgment that she would repent for her lifetime, besides inviting untold misery unto the family, and casting an ignominy on her that she could not wash ever? Manthra told Kaikeyi that if Lord Ram became the next king, her son Bharat would be relegated to a secondary position or made some junior minister, and worse he would either be imprisoned or banished in order to pre-empt any attempt by him to interfere with Lord Ram's supremacy, that she would have to live like a maid under the overall command of Kaushalya, the mother of Lord Ram and the chief queen, and her husband, king Dasrath, only pretended to love her, but actually he didn't, for he had kept his plans a secret from her. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 16—to Doha no. 19.}

Eventually it so happened that Lord Ram, his wife Sita, and his brother Laxman left Ayodhya to live like a hermit in the forest for 14 years, away from the city and inhabited areas.

On his way to the forest, the Lord got an opportunity to bless countless souls, men and women, sages, hermits and ascetics, travellers and other casual acquaintances, ordinary villagers and forest-dwelling tribes; the earth, the trees, the birds, and so many countless varieties of animals, were blessed too. The inanimate as well as the animate—both were fortunate to get a divine glimpse of the Supreme Being from up close, and interact with him, serve him, touch him, and he reciprocating their loving gestures with due affection. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 110—to Doha no. 122.}

Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman finally reached a place deep in the forest that was surrounded by mountains and meadows, where the river Mandakni, a tributary of river Ganges, flowed, and it had Nature displaying its inherent beauty and charm at its best;

this tranquil and serene place was called Chitrakoot. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 132—to Doha no. 140.}

This part of the Story covers half of ‘Ayodhya Kand’. In the second half we read that king Dasrath died due to grief, and Bharat and his brother Shatrughan, who were completely unaware of the sad developments in Ayodhya as they had gone to visit their maternal uncle’s place earlier, rushed back to the city when a messenger sent by the royal priest of Ayodhya, sage Vasistha, urgently asked them to return home. Upon return, the two brothers discovered to their utter dismay and frustration the grave consequences resulting from the mischief committed by Kaikeyi. Bharat was crestfallen, for he loved Lord Ram more than anybody. He severely took his mother Kaikeyi to task, even abused her and scolded her bitterly, but was already done could not be undone so quickly, for it was too late now reverse the course of events. Yet, Bharat decided not to accept the crown, even temporarily, and eschew from doing anything that would be interpreted as his being a party to this evil game. Hence, he decided to go to the forest with chief ministers and a detachment of the army to bring Lord Ram back home and restore the crown to him. {This part of the Story has been narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 154—to Doha no. 184.}

Bharat traced the path taken by Lord Ram earlier, meeting those whom the Lord had met on his way to the forest, and asking them for guidance and advice as to the direction in which he must proceed to the forest so as to meet the Lord somewhere ahead. By and by, Bharat reached Chitrakoot; there was an emotional and tearful reunion between the two loving brothers, Lord Ram and Bharat, as was also between all others who had accompanied Bharat when they met Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman. {We shall read all about it in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 187—to Doha no. 246.}

A meeting was organized, and Bharat made a strong and determined pitch to try and persuade Lord Ram to return home, even offering to go to the forest himself with his brother Shatrughan in place of the Lord and Laxman. Meanwhile, king Janak also arrived at Chitrakoot as he had heard of the developments in Ayodhya. Another round of discussions was held, where Bharat made an emotional appeal to Lord Ram to return home. But though the Lord was very moved by Bharat’s love for him, and might have yielded, yet he had to become stern and stone-hearted because much was at stake, the demons had to be taken down, and for the time being it was expedient not to yield to emotions, become sentimental or moved due to love; there was no scope for leniency or complacency in this job. {This part of the Story has been narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 253—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 316.}

Hence, Lord Ram prevailed upon Bharat to return home with the Lord’s footwear as his token presence in Ayodhya, with a promise that he would return as soon as the 14 year time frame for him to live in the forest, as ordered by their father Dasrath, ended, and not one second later. Bharat returned home, but he put the sandals of the Lord on the throne of Ayodhya to mark the Lord’s symbolic presence there, and himself he retired to a hermitage on the outskirts of the city to live like a hermit in the same way as Lord Ram lived in the forest. The day-to-day affairs of the kingdom were looked after by Shatrughan in consultations with Bharat. This brings us to the end of Canto 2

called ‘Ayodhya Kand’. {We read all of it in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 316—to Doha no. 326.}

What happened next will be narrated in the next Canto no. 3, called ‘Aranya Kand’.

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Canto 2: Ayodhyā-Kāṇḍa

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द्वितीय सोपान
(अयोध्याकाण्ड)
ŚrīRāmaCaritaMānasa

dvitīya sōpāna
(ayodhyā-kāṇḍa)

श्लोक

यस्याङ्गे च विभाति भूधरसुता देवापगा मस्तके
भाले बालविधुर्गले च गरलं यस्योरसि व्यालराट्।
सोऽयं भूतिविभूषणः सुरवरः सर्वाधिपः सर्वदा
शर्वः सर्वगतः शिवः शशिनिभः श्रीशङ्करः पातु माम् ॥१॥

ślōka.

yasyāṅkē ca vibhāti bhūdhara-sutā dēvāpagā mastakē
bhālē bālavīdhur-galē ca garalaṁ yasyōrasi vyālarāṭ.
sō 'yaṁ bhūti-vibhūṣaṇaḥ suravaraḥ sarvādhīpaḥ sarvadā
śarvaḥ sarvagataḥ śivaḥ śaśinibhaḥ śrīśaṅkaraḥ pātu mām. 1.

[This Shloka, or Sanskrit verse, is in praise of Lord Shiva; it invokes the blessings of the Lord and requests him to protect the person who says this prayer. In this case, the person who makes this submission to Lord Shiva is Goswami Tulsidas, the learned poet-saint who had written Ram Charit Manas as we read it now.]

‘I offer my obeisance and prayers to Lord Shiva who has goddess Parvati present to his left, the Lord who is adorned by the presence of the holy river Ganges on his head (in the thick matted crown of hairs that the Lord wears)¹, the crescent moon on the left side of his forehead (above the eyebrows), the poison called Halaal stored in his throat (neck)², serpents resting on his broad chest, and ash from the sacrificial fire smeared

all over his divine body, the Lord who is the most exalted and revered amongst the pantheon of Gods, the Lord who is the ‘Supreme Lord’ of one and all in all phases of time and eras³, who is the concluder of everything that exists⁴, who destroys the sins and their consequences for his devotees, who is omnipresent and omniscient, who is an embodiment of auspiciousness and the all-round welfare and well-being of all, and whose countenance is as radiant as the full moon—verily indeed, I most humbly pay my respects to Lord Shiva, beg him to protect me.’

[Note—¹When the holy river Ganges descended on earth from the heaven, it was feared that its immense gush and force would crack the earth and wash it away. So the Gods asked Lord Shiva to help preserve the creation and protect the earth by trapping the huge mass of water, coming down with terrible force and violence from the heaven, on his head, by letting it swirl and churn in the mass of intertwined hairs present on Lord Shiva’s head and forming a crown that adorns him like an ascetic. Later on, a stream from this gigantic reservoir on Lord Shiva’s head, which we can liken to a modern-day dam built to control the flow of great rivers, would be eventually allowed to escape, and it meandered down to the plains and came to be known as river Ganges.

²The Halaal poison was produced at the time of churning of the ocean by the gods and their cousins, the demons, in some ancient time. It was so corrosive that if it felt anywhere that place would burn. So, the creator Brahma and other Gods requested Lord Shiva to help them overcome this predicament by keeping it secure in his throat. That is why Lord Shiva’s neck became purple due to the presence of this poison. It is believed that Lord Shiva invoked the holy name of Lord Ram before he drank that poison, and this divine name was so protective and effective that no harm came to Shiva and the poison itself was neutralized. This fact has been hinted at in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 19.

³Lord Shiva is also known as ‘Mahadeva’, the Great God or the Supreme God.

⁴He is the third God of the Trinity, and responsible for bringing this creation to an end. The other two Gods are Brahma who creates, and Vishnu who takes care of the creation before its time expires.]

प्रसन्नतां या न गताभिषेकतस्तथा न मञ्जे वनवासदुःखतः ।

मुखाञ्जुजश्री रघुनन्दनस्य मे सदास्तु सा मञ्जुलमङ्गलप्रदा ॥२॥

prasannatām yā na gatābhiṣēkatatasthā na mamlē vanavāsa-duḥkhataḥ.
mukhāmbujaśrī raghunandanasya mē sadāstu sā mañjula-maṅgalapradā. 2.

[This second Shloka is dedicated to Lord Ram.]

The radiance, pleasing, affectionate and charming look of Lord Ram’s face is so constant and unchanging that it was neither enhanced with the news of his being appointed to the throne of the kingdom of Ayodhya nor diminished or tainted with the news of his being suddenly banished to the forest (for 14 long years)¹—verily indeed, the charm and affection radiating out from that face of Lord Ram, who gives immense

joy and glory to the family descending from the great legendary king Raghu of Ayodhya, grants immense and constant pleasure, comfort, solace and succour to me.'

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 41; (ii) Doha no. 51 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it; (iii) Doha no. 116 and Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it; (iv) Doha no. 165 along with Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it.]

नीलाञ्जुजश्यामलकोमलाङ्गं सीतासमारोपितवामभागम् ।

पाणौ महासायकचारुचापं नमामि रामं रघुवंशनाथम् ॥३॥

nīlāmbuja-śyāmala-kōmalāṅgaṁ sītāsamārōpita-vāmabhāgam.

pāṇau mahāsāyaka-cārucāpaṁ namāmi rāmaṁ raghuvāṁśa-nātham. 3.

[Continuing with his praise for Lord Ram, Tulsidas says—] 'Lord Ram, whose form has a dark hue and softness (or tenderness) like that of the petals of a blue lotus flower, who is adorned and glorified by the presence of his divine consort Sita to his left, and who holds an infallible Arrow in one hand and a beautiful Bow (named Sharang)¹ in the other hand—verily indeed, I bow before and pay my deepest reverence to that Lord (Ram) who is the most exalted Lord of the race of illustrious kings descending from an ancient king named Raghu (of Ayodhya).' (3)

[Note—¹The 'Sharang Bow' is held by Lord Vishnu, and Lord Ram is his manifestation.]

दो०. श्रीगुरु चरन सरोज रज निज मनु मुकुरुसुधारि ।

बरनउँ रघुबर बिमल जसु जो दायकु फल चारि ॥ ० ॥

dōhā.

śrīguru carana sarōja raja nija manu mukuru sudhāri.

barana'um' raghubara bimala jasu jō dāyaku phala cāri. 0.

I hereby resume the narration of the spiritually purifying, holy, divine and glories Story of Lord Ram, the Lord of the Raghus—a Story that grants all the desired four fruits or rewards of life to a devotee¹—by first using the purifying dust of the revered feet of my Guru (moral preceptor, teacher and guide) to rub and clean the symbolic mirror of my Mana (mind and heart) (so that I can properly and correctly understand the intricacies of this Story and clearly see the depth of things myself to enable me to narrate it for the benefit of others, because the narrator should first be clear himself about what he is about to narrate in order to make his narrative genuine, precise, authentic, authoritative, and free from the error of omission of crucial details, or of misrepresentation or misinterpretation of facts)². (Doha no. 0)³

[Note—¹The four rewards that a person, who is spiritual and righteous by his inherent nature, and who has led a life free from sins, would get, are the following: (i) Artha (prosperity and well-being), (ii) Dharma (the merit and glory that comes to a person who follows laws and rules of righteousness, auspiciousness, probity, prosperity,

ethics, morality and good conduct in all spheres of life), (iii) Kaam (fulfillment of all desires), and finally (iv) Moksha (liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation; attainment of eternal bliss, beatitude, felicity and peace for his soul).

²Obeisance to the Guru has been made by the learned poet Tulsidas earlier too, in the very beginning of this Book 'Ram Charit Manas'. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Sortha line nos. 9-10 that precede Doha no. 1—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 2.

³This Doha is numbered as 'zero' (0) because it is the concluding part of the initial invocation prayers offered to Lords Shiva and Ram in the Shlokas herein above, and is not a part of the actual narration of the Story of Lord Ram, which follows herein below.

This is a standard practice followed in all the seven Cantos, as all open with verses in Sanskrit known as the 'Shloka' that offer some sort of prayer to the chosen deity, at the end of which there is a concluding verse either as Doha or as its variant known as a Sortha.

Examples of 'Sortha' used to open a particular Canto is found in the beginning of the first Canto called Baal Kand, as well as in the third and fourth Cantos called Aranya Kand and Kishkindha Kand respectively. In the beginning of the sixth Canto, i.e. the Lanka Kand, both the patterns are found, i.e. there is the 'Doha' which is followed by the 'Sortha'. For the other Cantos, i.e. the present one known as Ayodhya Kand, and the last Canto, the seventh, known as Uttar Kand, we have the 'Doha' to mark the end of the Shloka and the beginning of narrative.]

चौ०. जब तें रामु ब्याहि घर आए । नित नव मंगल मोद बधाए ॥ १ ॥
भुवन चारिदस भूधर भारी । सुकृत मेघ बरषहिं सुख बारी ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

jaba tēm rāmu byāhi ghara ā'ē. nita nava maṅgala mōda badhā'ē. 1.
bhuvana cāridasa bhūdhara bhārī. sukr̥ta mēgha baraṣahin sukha bārī. 2.

From the very day Lord Ram returned to Ayodhya after his marriage¹, there were newer celebrations and festivities every day, along with general merriment, singing of auspicious songs, and playing of different types of musical instruments. (1)

During those auspicious days of joy and celebrations (that followed Lord Ram's marriage), Mother Nature too participated with enthusiasm, which she exhibited in a symbolic way by blessing the entire universe, consisting of fourteen divisions known as the 'Fourteen Bhuvans'², which were like so many huge mountains over which clouds, symbolizing meritorious deeds, poured down an abundance of rain in the form of all round joy, happiness and contentedness (that automatically come as a natural reward of meritorious deeds done by a creature)³. (2)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 343—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 355; (ii) Doha no. 359.

²The celestial sphere is divided into seven upper worlds and seven lower worlds, totaling fourteen divisions called 'Bhuvans' or abodes of various categories of creatures, some high and exalted such as the gods, some lower down but still higher than other in the hierarchy of creation, such as the humans, and others lower down in the rung, such as the animate beings and inanimate things as members of animal and plant kingdom, as well as the grosser components of this creation such as the mountains, rivers, earth, water, fire, air etc.

An atmosphere of happiness and joy is marked by abundance, pleasure and cheer all around, while gloom and despair is marked by the opposite characters of darkness and lack of everything that is good and cheering.

Abundance of rainfall, greenery, colour, verdant forests, flowers in bloom, ready harvests, rivers full of clean water, chirping of birds and harmony between all the animals who forget their natural enmity but live peacefully together, and all other such signs indicate happiness in Nature, as are the singing of songs, playing of musical instruments, laughter, festivities, celebrations etc. that symbolize fertility and prosperity in the world; while famine, draught, storms, extremes of weather, disputes, disharmony, quarrels, wars, strife etc. stand for just the opposite.

The signs described in these verses indicate that the days that followed Lord Ram's marriage were very happy for one and all.

The next set of verses would elaborate on this idea, that the days following Lord Ram's marriage were so auspicious and happy that it seemed that the heaven had itself descended upon earth.

³Everyone was mindful of his or her actions; everyone acted in a righteous and proper way; evil deeds and sinful acts were unknown. Hence, doing meritorious deeds and following principles of good conduct by one and all brought in their wake rewards of happiness and joy for everyone, everywhere.

The abundance of good deeds, and its accompanying happiness for all in this world, is represented in this verse by clouds showering plenty of rain over the lofty mountains that represent all the fourteen divisions of the universe, and this rain would in its turn make the forests covering these mountains vibrant with greenery and colour, and also provide water to the great lakes and the rivers that have their origin in these high mountains. These rivers would, in due course of time, irrigate the plains below, providing vigour and vibrancy to life in this world.]

रिधि सिधि संपति नदीं सुहाई । उमगि अवध अंबुधि कहूँ आई ॥ ३ ॥
मनिगन पुर नर नारि सुजाती । सुचि अमोल सुंदर सब भाँती ॥ ४ ॥

ridhi sidhi sampati nadīm suhāī. umagi avadha ambudhi kahum̐ āī. 3.
manigana pura nara nāri sujātī. suci amōla sundara saba bhām̐tī. 4.

Prosperity, well-being, abundance, riches, successes, fulfilment of wishes, opulence, affluence et al—all such blessings came flowing on their own to Ayodhya, which was like an ocean towards which great rivers, brimming over with water, flow automatically¹. (3)

In this symbolic ocean (i.e. in Ayodhya, the realm of Lord Ram) lived the fortunate and meritorious inhabitants who were like the best of gems and precious stones, that are priceless and beautiful, found in an ocean². (4)

[Note—¹In this analogy, the kingdom of Ayodhya is likened to an ocean into which all the great rivers flow on their own, in a natural way. The idea is that every imaginable good virtue and blessing that one could expect to have in this life was easily available to all the creatures in the realm of Lord Ram.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 306; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 294; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 345; (b) Uttar Kand, (iv) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 11; (v) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 22—to Doha no. 23.

²In this metaphor, the kingdom of Ayodhya is likened to an ocean, and its inhabitants, who led a meritorious life following all the laws and rules of Dharma, i.e. principles of good conduct, righteousness, auspiciousness, probity, propriety, ethics and morality, to priceless gems and precious stones that are found only in the ocean.

Even as certain rare and priceless gems are found only in the ocean and nowhere else, the excellent virtues and meritorious life of the residents of Ayodhya were so immense and exclusive to them that it was rare, if not impossible, to find such fortunate and good people anywhere else in the world.

In this context, refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 20—to Doha no. 21.

The verses that follow herein below further endorse this view.]

कहि न जाइ कछु नगर बिभूती । जनु एतनिअ बिरंचि करतूती ॥ ५ ॥
सब बिधि सब पुर लोग सुखारी । रामचंद मुख चंदु निहारी ॥ ६ ॥

kahi na jā'i kachu nagara bibhūti. janu ētani'a biran̄ci karatūtī. 5.
saba bidhi saba pura lōga sukhārī. rāmacanda mukha candu nihārī. 6.

The stupendous beauty, splendour, and magnificence of the city of Ayodhya were exceptional, and so profound and majestic that they cannot be described and limited by the use of words; it looked as if the skills of the creator Brahma in craftsmanship and creation of grandeur were exemplified by Ayodhya, as it presented the best of what he (Brahma) could create¹. (5)

The inhabitants of the city were contented and happy in all imaginable way, for there was no better joy for them than being able to have the privilege of seeing Lord Ram's charming face (that granted immense pleasure to the beholder) whenever they wished to see it (without any hindrance, formalities and obstacles)². (6)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 194; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 195; (b) Uttar Kand, (iii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 27—to Doha no. 29.

Refer also to Geetawali, Uttar Kand, verse no. 23.

²Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 200; (b) Uttar Kand, (ii) Doha no. 30 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-10 that precede it.

The citizens had easy access to their beloved princes Lord Ram. Whenever they wished they could get in touch with the Lord. The Lord always received his subjects with warmth, smile and welcome gesture; he never got irritated or annoyed. So everyone felt at ease and developed a personal bond of affection and allegiance to Lord Ram, feeling assured of the personal attention and affection of the Lord for themselves. This attitude of Lord Ram endeared him to everyone.

We have already read that the city was prosperous and thriving, with an abundance of everything and dearth of nothing that one would need for a happy life. This was coupled by the gracious and good nature of their king Dasrath, as well as their prince, the heir to the throne, Lord Ram. What more would anyone want?]

मुदित मातु सब सखीं सहेली । फलित बिलोकि मनोरथ बेली ॥ ७ ॥

राम रूपु गुन सीलु सुभाऊ । प्रमुदित होइ देखि सुनि राऊ ॥ ८ ॥

mudita mātu saba sakhīṁ sahēlī. phalita bilōki manōratha bēlī. 7.
rāma rūpu guna sīlu subhā'ū. pramudita hō'i dēkhi suni rā'ū. 8.

The mothers (Kaushalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi), with their companions and maids, were very happy and delighted at the good fortune bestowed upon them all, as if the creepers symbolizing their wishes and desires have borne fruits of their choice¹. (7)

When the king (Dasrath) heard about the gracious and courteous nature of Lord Ram, about his excellent character and qualities, of his being loved by everyone, and observed his handsome features (i.e. his prime health and vigour)—the king was immensely pleased; he felt contented and profoundly blessed². (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 346; (ii) Doha no. 350-a.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 2; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 3.

It is natural for a father as well as a mother to feel highly glad and proud when they sees that their son is of an excellent character, is most competent, is loved by everyone, is healthy, handsome and obedient, would successfully step in the shoes of his father when the time comes, and will uphold the great tradition of the family in a most competent and able manner, even excelling his father in many fields. These observations would fill any parent with a great sense of accomplishment and happiness; he or she would be giving thanks to God and all those to whom they had been offering prayers for granting them the joy of having such an exemplary offspring.

Compare this good fortune of a father to another whose son is a taint on the name of the family due to his evil nature, bad character and habits, or who is of a sickly body and totally incompetent in every way. Say, how dejected, dismayed and depressed would the father of such a son would be?]

दो०. सब केँ उर अभिलाषु अस कहहिं मनाइ महेसु ।
आप अछत जुबराज पद रामहि देउ नरेसु ॥ १ ॥

dōhā.

saba kēm ura abhilāṣu asa kahahim manā'i mahēsu.
āpa achata jubarāja pada rāmahi dē'u narēsu. 1.

Everyone had a cherished wish that the king should appoint Lord Ram to the throne as the next sovereign (as soon as possible).

So they mentally prayed to Lord Shiva (to whom the entire population of Ayodhya was devoted to, and all worshipped Shiva as their deity) to invoke the Lord's blessings so that the king would anoint Lord Ram to the throne during his lifetime, while there is still time for him*¹. (Doha no. 1)

[*This verse can be read as follows also: "Everyone had a cherished wish that the king should appoint Lord Ram to the throne as the next sovereign (as soon as possible).]

So they mentally prayed to Lord Shiva (to whom the entire population of Ayodhya was devoted to, and all worshipped Shiva as their deity) to invoke the Lord's blessings before approaching the king (Dasrath) with the proposal. They said to the king: 'Oh Lord! Please appoint Lord Ram to the throne of Ayodhya yourself while there is still time for you (because you are getting old, and we don't want any tussle for the crown in your absence)'.]

[Note—¹In this context, refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1, 6-8 that precede Doha no. 2—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 4]

चौ०. एक समय सब सहित समाजा । राजसभाँ रघुराजु बिराजा ॥ १ ॥
सकल सुकृत मूरति नरनाहू । राम सुजसु सुनि अतिहि उछाहू ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

ēka samaya saba sahita samājā. rājasabhām̐ raghurāju birājā. 1.
sakala sukr̥ta mūrati naranāhū. rāma sujasu suni atihi uchāhū. 2.

One day, the King of the Raghu dynasty (i.e. king Dasrath of the kingdom of Ayodhya) sat on his throne in the royal court attended by all his ministers and courtiers. (1)

--- The king (naranāhū) was an embodiment of all meritorious deeds¹. He felt very contented and exceedingly happy as he heard of the glories and merits of Lord Ram². (2)

[Note—¹The glory, majesty and greatness of king Dasrath has been lauded elsewhere too in Ram Charit Manas, e.g. (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 294; (b) Ayodhya Kand, (ii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no.

173—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 174. In both these cases, king Dasrath has been praised by sage Vasistha.

The verses that follow herein below also praise king Dasrath and his good fortune.

²Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 1. It is apparent here that though the two verses speak the same thing, the context is different. This previous verse refers to king Dasrath feeling happy and elated in a general way as his informers and spies informed him in private, and in an informal way, about the excellent character, nature and behaviour of his son Lord Ram, and how every single citizen of the kingdom loved him, while the present verse we are currently reading herein above refers to a specific occasion when the king was attending his royal court, and good news about Lord Ram was conveyed to him by his ministers and courtiers in a formal way, in the form of a report that they presented to him in the course of routine discussion about the affairs of the kingdom and its administration.]

नृप सब रहहिं कृपा अभिलाषें । लोकप करहिं प्रीति रुख राखें ॥ ३ ॥
 तिभुवन तीनि काल जग माहीं । भूरि भाग दसरथ सम नाहीं ॥ ४ ॥
 मंगलमूल रामु सुत जासू । जो कछु कहिअ थोर सबु तासू ॥ ५ ॥

nṛpa saba rahahim kṛpā abhilāṣēm. lōkapa karahim prīti rukha rākhēm. 3.
 tibhuvana tīni kāla jaga māhīm. bhūri bhāga dasaratha sama nāhīm. 4.
 maṅgalamūla rāmu suta jāśū. jō kachu kahi'a thōra sabu tāsū. 5.

Verily indeed, who can sufficiently praise the glories, majesty and greatness of king Dasrath whose favour and grace other great kings solicited and wished to have; even the Lokpals (custodians of the various divisions of the world; the gods looking after different functions of creation) were always favourable to him, and they did everything keeping in view his positive response to their actions (because they knew that his son, Lord Ram, was their benefactor and protector, and would eventually free them from the torments of the demon race). (3)

Forsooth and without gainsay, there was no one as lucky and fortunate as king Dasrath in the entire Tribhuvan (the three divisions of the world: heaven, earth and nether world) as well as all the eras of time (past, present and future). (4)

[Why was Dasrath so fortunate? The answer is this—] He whose son was Lord Ram, a personified form of the Supreme Being, and the Lord of the world who is the root of all auspiciousness, good fortunes, happiness and bliss¹—whatever is said of such a king (Dasrath) would fall short of the truth about him, and would be insufficient to enumerate or measure his good fortunes, majesty, glory and greatness. (5)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 112; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 294; (iii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 304; (b) Ayodhya Kand, (iv) Doha no. 173.]

रायँ सुभायँ मुकुरु कर लीन्हा । बदनु बिलोकि मुकुटु सम कीन्हा ॥ ६ ॥
 श्रवन समीप भए सित केसा । मनहुँ जरठपनु अस उपदेसा ॥ ७ ॥
 नृप जुबराजु राम कहूँ देहू । जीवन जनम लाहु किन लेहू ॥ ८ ॥

rāyam' subhāyam' mukuru kara līnhā. badanu bilōki mukuṭu sama kīnhā. 6.
 śravana samīpa bha'e sita kēsā. manahum' jaraṭhapanu asa upadēsā. 7.
 nrpa jubarāju rāma kahum' dēhū. jīvana janama lāhu kina lēhū. 8.

It so happened that once the king picked up his viewing mirror in his hand and looked at the reflection of his face in it in order to adjust the crown on his head. (6)

He observed that the hair line near his ears had turned grey, and he took it as a signal from Old Age that was alerting him and whispering in his ears as follows—(7)

‘Oh King! It is prudent and wise for you to anoint Lord Ram as the heir to the throne, as the regent of the kingdom, and thereby realize the reward of happiness in life, as well as your objective.¹’ (8)

[Note—¹We have read earlier in Baal Kand that when Dasrath realized that he had no heir to inherit his legacy and look after the kingdom upon his death, he had approached his royal priest, sage Vasistha, to find a way out of this dilemma, whereat the sage advised him to invite sage Sringi to perform a son-begetting fire sacrifice. It was successful, and the Fire God revealed himself to give the king a magical potion, asking him to distribute it among his queens. In due course of time, the four brothers, Lord Ram, Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan, were born. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 189—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 190.

So, ‘Old Age’ refers to that desire of king Dasrath, and hints to him that it would be fulfilled only when he goes ahead with the succession plan and appoint Lord Ram, the eldest son, to the throne. It was urgent and necessary to do so while there was still time in the hands of the king, because no one can be certain when death comes knocking, and in case the king dies before appointing a heir there were fair chances of a tussle for the crown among the four brothers, which would be very unfortunate and a result of negligence, indecision or procrastination on the part of the king. Hence, it was crucial that he take remedial steps as soon as possible.

It ought to be noted here that there were constant appeals by the citizen to appoint Lord Ram as the prince-regent, but the king had taken no action till then. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 1.]

दो०. यह बिचारु उर आनि नृप सुदिनु सुअवसरु पाइ ।
 प्रेम पुलकि तन मुदित मन गुरहि सुनायउ जाइ ॥ २ ॥
 dōhā.

yaha bicāru ura āni nrpa sudinu su'avasaru pā'i.
 prēma pulaki tana mudita mana guraḥi sunāya'u jā'i. 2.

When this thought took roots in the heart of the king, he determined to give effect to his plans (of appointing Lord Ram as the prince-regent).

One fine day when the right opportunity came, he went to meet his royal priest and guru (sage Vasistha) with a thrilled body and cheerful disposition, and conveyed to the latter what was in his Mana (mind and heart) (regarding appointment of Lord Ram as the heir to the kingdom)¹. (Doha no. 2)

[Note—It was a great tradition in the kingdom that before taking any important decision, or whenever some good or bad news arrived, the king would go and seek advise and guidance from his guru, sage Vasistha, who also officiated as the royal priest. The king would tell the guru all about his thoughts and frankly shared with him all matters of concern, whether good or bad. This fact is very explicitly expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 189.]

चौ०. कहइ भुआलु सुनिअ मुनिनायक । भए राम सब बिधि सब लायक ॥ १ ॥
 सेवक सचिव सकल पुरबासी । जे हमारे अरि मित्र उदासी ॥ २ ॥
 सबहि रामु प्रिय जेहि बिधि मोही । प्रभु असीस जनु तनु धरि सोही ॥ ३ ॥
 बिप्र सहित परिवार गोसाईं । करहिं छोहु सब रौरिहि नाई ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

kaha'i bhu'ālu suni'a munināyaka. bha'ē rāma saba bidhi saba lāyaka. 1.
 sēvaka saciva sakala purabāsī. jē hamārē ari mitra udāsī. 2.
 sabahi rāmu priya jēhi bidhi mōhī. prabhu asīsa janu tanu dhari sōhī. 3.
 bipra sahita parivāra gōsā'īm. karahim chōhu saba raurihi nā'īm. 4.

The king said to the sage (Vasistha): 'Oh great sage, please pay attention to my submission. Lord Ram has become an adult, and he has grown up to become competent, skilled and accomplished in all spheres and in every possible way. (1)

He is very dear to one and all—to our servants, ministers, courtiers and citizens, as well to our relations, friends and acquaintances so much so that even our enemies or those who have no relationship with us or any interest in our affairs, such as ascetics, hermits and friars who usually remain detached from all sorts of attachments and development of affection or personal bonds with anyone (2), ---

--- Are favourably inclined towards him and love him as much as I do (as his father)¹. It appears that your blessings and grace has been personified in the form of Lord Ram which has made it possible for him to be dear to everyone². (3)

Oh revered Brahmin (gōsā'īm)! All Brahmins and their families in the realm love and respect him (Lord Ram) in the same manner as you do. (4)

[Note—¹Lord Ram was loved by one and all. Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 200; (ii) Doha no. 204; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 216; (iv) Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 229; (b) Ayodhya Kand, (v) Doha no. 122 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it.

²Sage Vasistha was a renowned and learned sage, universally respected, and much sought after, with everyone wishing to get his blessings irrespective of who he was, or what his social standing was, the kingdom where he lived, whether or not his own king had good relationship with the king of Ayodhya where sage Vasistha resided, and so on and so forth. The idea here is that Lord Ram had an universal appeal, was loved by everyone, friend and foe alike, and everyone would be pleased if he ascended the throne of Ayodhya. To wit, even enemies of the kingdom of Ayodhya would abandon their hostility towards it once Lord Ram became the sovereign.]

जे गुर चरन रेनु सिर धरहीं । ते जनु सकल बिभव बस करहीं ॥ ५ ॥
मोहि सम यह अनुभयउ न दूजें । सबु पायउँ रज पावनि पूजें ॥ ६ ॥

jē gura carana rēnu sira dharahīm. tē janu sakala bibhava basa karahīm. 5.
mōhi sama yahu anubhaya'u na dūjēm. sabu pāya'um'raja pāvani pūjēm. 6.

Indeed it is truly said that those who revere and worship the dust of their Guru's feet by putting it on the head, become so blessed and fortunate that they are able to vanquish the whole world and bring it under their command and influence¹. (5)

I can vouchsafe for this as there is no one who has witnessed the truth of this maxim as much as I have experienced in my life, for by worshipping your holy feet and its dust I have got everything I wished for and hoped to accomplish in my life. (6)

[Note—¹Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 1—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 2.]

अब अभिलाषु एकु मन मोरें । पूजिहि नाथ अनुग्रह तोरें ॥ ७ ॥
मुनि प्रसन्न लखि सहज सनेहू । कहेउ नरेस राजायसु देहू ॥ ८ ॥

aba abhilāṣu ēku mana mōrēm. pūjihi nātha anugraha tōrēm. 7.
muni prasanna lakhi sahaja sanēhū. kahē'u narēsa rajāyasu dēhū. 8.

That said, oh revered Guru, there is one last wish that I have in my heart, and I wish to submit it before you if you will be pleased to grant me your permission in this regard.' (7)

The king closely observed the reaction of sage Vasistha; how he heard his submission, how he received his plea, and what kind of response was expected from the sage. To his great pleasure, the king concluded that the sage was pleased with him, and he wished that the king would disclose the matter that he had in his heart.

Being thus reassured of a positive response from the sage, the king said: 'Oh sage. Please grant me your permission so that I can tell you my wish.' (8)

दो०. राजन राउर नामु जसु सब अभिमत दातार ।

फल अनुगामी महिप मनि मन अभिलाषु तुम्हार ॥ ३ ॥

dōhā.

rājana rā'ura nāmu jasu saba abhimata dātāra.
phala anugāmī mahipa mani mana abhilāṣu tumhāra. 3.

Sage Vasistha replied—‘Oh King! You are so fortunate and blessed, and your name and glory are so great that they can grant a person all that could wish for.

Oh Jewel amongst Kings (mahipa mani)! This being the case, it goes without saying that whatever you wish yourself will bear fruits. (Doha no. 3)

[Note—The greatness of king Dasrath has been praised by sage Vasistha elsewhere also in Ram Charit Manas. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 173—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 173.

King Dasrath was a ‘Chakravarti Emperor’, i.e. an emperor whose rule and command extended over a large area on earth, like a great circle having its center at Ayodhya, his capital city. There were many smaller kings and knights paying their respects to him. The idea here is that all wishes of a person would be fulfilled if he went and desired something from Dasrath; no one returned empty handed. In this context refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 196 (at the time of birth of Lord Ram and his brothers); (ii) Doha no. 345; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 351 (when all the brothers returned to Ayodhya after their marriage).]

चौ०. सब बिधि गुरु प्रसन्न जियँ जानी । बोलेउ राउ रहँसि मृदु बानी ॥ १ ॥

नाथ रामु करिअहिं जुबराजू । कहिअ कृपा करि करिअ समाजू ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

saba bidhi guru prasanna jiyam̐ jānī. bōlē'u rā'u raham̐si mṛdu bānī. 1.
nātha rāmu kari'ahim̐ jubarājū. kahi'a kṛpā kari kari'a samājū. 2.

Assured in his heart that his Guru (sage Vasistha) was pleased with him in every way (saba bidhi), the king (Dasrath) was very elated (and confident that his wishes would be accepted by the Guru); he smiled and spoke sweetly as follows: (1)

‘Oh Lord! Please be gracious to appoint Lord Ram as the Prince-Regent of the kingdom, and be kind to give me permission (consent or instructions) so that necessary arrangements can be made forthwith¹. (2)

[Note—¹This was also the wish of all the citizens of the kingdom. Refer: Doha no. 1 herein above.

It is to be noted here that the king had been hearing such requests from everyone for quite sometime, but he had not rushed through and gone to the guru urgently, because hurry would show him in poor light. Why so? It is because a king ought to be patient and thoughtful before taking such an important decision which would have profound impact on the future of the entire kingdom. It is wiser and better to wait for some time and give thought to the pros and cons of such a crucial decision,

especially when he had four sons, not one. As a wise, prudent, diplomatic and intelligent king, he wished to wait and watch the developments to make sure that this indeed was the wish of the masses, and not of some section of the society who wishes to please the king by asking him to make his eldest son, Lord Ram, as the heir, because they guessed that it was what the king would like to hear being told or advised, for after all, it was natural that the eldest son would inherit the crown. This fact that king Dasrath gave sufficient time to Prudence and Judgment to decide to go to his Guru Vasistha with this request is evident from the time gap between the first news of such wish of the citizens arriving informally to him through his spies (Doha no. 1) till some time later when he set on his throne in the court and observed the grey hair around his ears (Chaupai line nos. 1, 6-8 that precede Doha no. 2).

Then we note that when Dasrath meets Vasistha, he praises Lord Ram*, obviously to test how the sage reacts. {*Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 3.}

With this unexpected and unasked comment about Lord Ram—for Vasistha had never asked him anything about his sons—king Dasrath wished to give a hint to the sage about the purpose of his visit, that it has to do something with Lord Ram. During this interaction, the king closely watched the reaction on sage Vasistha's face, and he found that the sage was happy at this introductory remark. This assured the king that the Guru was sympathetic and favourable, and on the same page with him as far as Lord Ram was concerned.

Once Dasrath was convinced that he expected a favourable response from his chief priest and guru, sage Vasistha, he broached the subject in the verses that follow herein below.]

मोहि अछत यहु होइ उछाहू । लहहिं लोग सब लोचन लाहू ॥ ३ ॥
 प्रभु प्रसाद सिव सबइ निबाहीं । यह लालसा एक मन माहीं ॥ ४ ॥
 पुनि न सोच तनु रहउ कि जाऊ । जेहिं न होइ पाछें पछिताऊ ॥ ५ ॥

mōhi achata yahu hō'i uchāhū. lahahim lōga saba lōcana lāhū. 3.
 prabhu prasāda siva saba'i nibāhīm. yaha lālasā ēka mana māhīm. 4.
 puni na sōca tanu raha'u ki jā'ū. jēhim na hō'i pāchēm pachitā'ū. 5.

Let this landmark ceremony (of anointment of Lord Ram to the throne) take place while I am alive¹, and can actively organize and participate in it myself, so that not only me but everyone else can also enjoy the reward of having their eyes (i.e. everyone can participate and equally enjoy this spectacular event, and witness the glorious event of Lord Ram ascending the great throne of Ayodhya to become its regent and future king). (3)

By your grace and blessings, as well as that of Lord Shiva (prabhu prasāda siva), all my wishes have been fulfilled till now; and this is the last wish that I have in my heart (which I am sure would be likewise fulfilled)². (4)

After this (i.e. after I have appointed Lord Ram as the heir to the throne of Ayodhya) I will be free from all worries, and unconcerned with whether I live or die thereafter. I

wish to complete this ceremony before its too late, so that I won't have to regret later on.³ (5)

[Note—¹⁻²This is a clear and obvious reiteration of the wishes of all the citizens of Ayodhya to which the king was already aware of. We have read how the people had prayed to Lord Shiva and invoked the Lord's blessings so that Shiva would somehow initiate king Dasrath to appoint Lord Ram to the throne of Ayodhya. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 1.

Another point to be noted here is that Lord Shiva was the God worshipped and revered by the kings of Ayodhya. Lord Ram has made it amply clear when he had offered his prayers and installed a Shiva Lingam on the shore of the ocean before the War of Lanka. At that time Lord Ram has emphatically stressed that one must worship Lord Shiva if he wishes to please him. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 2—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 3; (b) Uttar Kand, (ii) Doha no. 45.}

Further, we read in Adhyatma Ramayan, Uttar Kand, that after returning to Ayodhya from the forest and ascending the throne as the King-Emperor, Lord Ram had installed countless Shiva Lingams in his realm. {Refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Canto 4, verse no. 27.}

³The king was apprehensive of fast approaching old age, and regretted that he had till now made no arrangement to decide on who would be the next king after him. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 2.}

Earlier we have read that absence of a son who would inherit the throne after his death was a nagging worry in the mind of king Dasrath. So one day he went to his guru with this problem to seek the latter's advice, upon which sage Vasistha had arranged the fire sacrifice by inviting sage Sringi, which in turn rewarded the king with his four sons, Lord Ram and his three brothers, Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 189.}

This was quite normal for the king to ask his guru to get things rolling quickly, to complete the formalities regarding anointment of Lord Ram as the Crown Prince while the king was active and healthy, as he was apprehensive of the possibility of a serious power struggle, a family tussle or feud, as well as the accompanying political intrigue that would ensue to capture the crown of the kingdom if unfortunately he dies leaving a vacuum. This apprehension would indeed prove to be true, as we shall find out soon—because Dasrath would discover, to his utter dismay and frustration and astonishment, that even while he was alive some very unexpected developments would take place that would suddenly upend his plans to anoint Lord Ram to the throne, and instead the Lord would be marched off to the forest for 14 long years of exile right before his own eyes, and ironically 'on his own wishes or instructions', and he would be able to do nothing, inspite of being a great king of a firm resolve and having the blessings of his guru! Indeed it is true that the fiat of Fate and the wish of Destiny and the decision of Providence are irrevocable and supersede all plans and decisions made by a man, no matter how mighty or powerful he may be. Imagine the cruelty of fate: even the mighty and powerful king Dasrath could not override the dictates of Fate, Destiny and Providence!]

सुनि मुनि दसरथ बचन सुहाए । मंगल मोद मूल मन भाए ॥ ६ ॥

सुनु नृप जासु बिमुख पछिताहीं । जासु भजन बिनु जरनि न जाहीं ॥ ७ ॥
भयउ तुम्हार तनय सोइ स्वामी । रामु पुनीत प्रेम अनुगामी ॥ ८ ॥

sunī muni dasaratha bacana suhā'ē. maṅgala mōda mūla mana bhā'ē. 6.
sunu nr̥pa jāsu bimukha pachitāhīm. jāsu bhajana binu jarani na jāhīm. 7.
bhaya'u tumhāra tanaya sō'i svāmī. rāmu punīta prēma anugāmī. 8.

The sage (Vasistha) was greatly pleased when he heard the pleasant words of king Dasrath, as what the king said was spoken sweetly, was meant for the welfare of all, and had an auspicious objective. So the sage liked them very much. (6)

The sage replied: 'Oh King, listen. You are so fortunate and blessed that you have a son so revered and respected by all that one gets nothing but regret and misfortune by opposing him, and the torments that afflict a living being cannot be dispelled without worshipping him. (7)

Indeed and forsooth, how lucky you are that the Lord Ram (who is a manifestation of the Supreme Being)—who is truly holy and divine, and who follows only one criterion of love to establish any relationship with others—has become your son¹. (8)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 187; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 193; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 294; (b) Ayodhya Kand, (iv) Doha no. 173 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede it; (v) Doha no. 209 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it.]

दो०. बेगि बिलंबु न करिअ नृप साजिअ सबुइ समाजु ।
सुदिन सुमंगलु तबहिं जब रामु होहिं जुबराजु ॥ ४ ॥

dōhā.

bēgi bilambu na kari'a nr̥pa sāji'a sabu'i samāju.
sudina sumaṅgalu tabahīm jaba rāmu hōhīm jubarāju. 4.

Oh King, don't delay any further; make all necessary arrangements for anointing Lord Ram as the Prince-Regent, for that moment when the Lord ascends the throne would be deemed to be right, auspicious and welcome.¹ (Doha no. 4)

[Note—¹A very pertinent and interesting question arises here: Was sage Vasistha, who was reputed to be all-knowing as he was a son of the creator Brahma*, unaware of what was in store for Lord Ram, that the Lord was soon destined to go to the forest to slay the demons as this was the primary objective of the Supreme Being to manifest himself in the form of Lord Ram? {*Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 48 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it.}

No, it is not so; Vasistha has very cleverly hidden his reluctance to give full consent to Dasrath by not specifying a time frame for the anointment ceremony, as is usually expected from a priest. He deflects the issue by a deft circumventing statement when he says: "the moment when the Lord ascends the throne would be

deemed to be right, auspicious and welcome”. That “moment” has not been defined or precisely laid down! It is an open option—any moment when Lord Ram ascends the throne would be right, auspicious and welcome. That “moment” can be now or in a distant point of time. Vasistha has not precisely said anything, for example, ‘let the anointment ceremony be held on such-and-such date and time’.

A similar conversation between Dasrath and Vasistha has been narrated in Geetawali Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, verse no. 1.]

चौ०. मुदित महीपति मंदिर आए । सेवक सचिव सुमंत्र बोलाए ॥ १ ॥

कहि जयजीव सीस तिन्ह नाए । भूप सुमंगल बचन सुनाए ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

mudita mahīpati mandira ā'ē. sēvaka saciva sumantru bōlā'ē. 1.
kahi jayajīva sīsa tinha nā'ē. bhūpa sumaṅgala bacana sunā'ē. 2.

Upon receiving sage Vasistha's approval (for his plans to anoint Lord Ram as the next king of Ayodhya), the king (Dasrath) came back to his palace, elated and happy. He summoned his servants and ministers, especially the chief minister named Sumantra. (1)

All of them came and paid their obeisance to the king by wishing him and bowing their heads before him. Then the king conveyed to them the auspicious news (that he has obtained the approval of the chief priest of the kingdom to appoint Lord Ram is the Prince-Regent of the kingdom)¹. (2)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 4.]

जौं पाँचहि मत लागै नीका । करहु हरषि हियँ रामहि टीका ॥ ३ ॥

मंत्री मुदित सुनत प्रिय बानी । अभिमत बिरवँ परेउ जनु पानी ॥ ४ ॥

jauṁ pām̐cahi mata lāgai nīkā. karahu haraṣi hiyaṁ' rāmahi ṭīkā. 3.
mantrī mudita sunata priya bānī. abhimata biravam' parē'u janu pānī. 4.

Now, if this plan is liked by you all and you approve of it unanimously, then please go ahead and make necessary arrangements so that Lord Ram can be anointed on the throne.¹ (3)

All the ministers and counselors were exhilarated when they heard these words, as if a shower of rain has fallen on the plant symbolized by their personal wishes, because what the king said was also their own desire.

[So therefore, they enthusiastically endorsed the king's plan as is clear in the next set of verses.] (4)

[Note—¹An important observation can be made here. King Dasrath was a wise and prudent king, well-versed in polity and diplomacy. So first he received feedback from his trusted aides and spies about what the people say concerning Lord Ram, and this

feedback was very positive. Then he waited and watched, giving ample time to his mind to filter information and determine the right course of action; he did not rush through anything. Once he was fully satisfied and convinced that it would be perfect to appoint Lord Ram to the throne, he kept it a secret in his heart, and first went to discuss the matter with his guru, sage Vasistha, before divulging it to others.

Once the guru whole-heartedly supported him, the king then disclosed his plans to other, but first to his chief minister Sumantra, and then subsequently to all the rest of the ministers and courtiers, as well as the royal servants.

The king still wanted to make it certain that his decision would get mass support and approval; so he asked his courtiers and ministers to discuss the matter amongst themselves, like it is done in the modern world in democracies when any crucial decision of the government is discussed by the cabinet consisting of senior members of the government before it is made public and enacted as a law.

We will note that it was a step-by-step process, and not something done in a whimsical or emotional way. This is how great kings used to rule in a democratic way, which made it possible for them to take everyone along in the decisions they took, with the least chance of having any resistance.]

बिनती सचिव करहिं कर जोरी । जिअहु जगतपति बरिस करोरी ॥ ५ ॥
जग मंगल भल काजु बिचारा । बेगिअ नाथ न लाइअ बारा ॥ ६ ॥
नृपहि मोदु सुनि सचिव सुभाषा । बढत बौंड़ जनु लही सुसाखा ॥ ७ ॥

binatī saciva karahim kara jōrī. ji'ahu jagatapati barisa karōrī. 5.
jaga maṅgala bhala kāju bicārā. bēgi'a nātha na lā'i'a bārā. 6.
nṛpahi mōdu suni saciva subhāṣā. baṛhata bauṇṛa janu lahī susākhā. 7.

All the ministers joined the palms of their respective hands (as a gesture of respect to the king) as they gave their unanimous approval by submitting before him as follows: 'Oh the Lord of the Realm (jagatapati)! May thou live for a hundred-and-thousand years! (5)

The plan that thou have envisioned is very auspicious, and it is a harbinger of all good and welfare for the world (jaga maṅgala bhala kāju). So therefore, we will waste no time in giving effect to it, and make proper arrangements so that it can be implemented as soon as it is possible; there will be no slackness or carelessness on our part.' (6)

When the king heard this enthusiastic response of the ministers, he was very delighted as if a creeper, that has found new vigour to expand and grow due to a shower of invigorating rain that has energized it, finds the support of a robust green tree to aid in its plans¹. (7)

[Note—¹The king was exceedingly happy when he found that the ministers and courtiers whole-heartedly approved of his plan, because it meant that his dream to appoint Lord Ram to the throne would now be fulfilled, and there would be no impediment in it.

In this metaphor, the desire of the king to appoint Lord Ram to the throne is the ‘creeper’; the approval of the guru is like the ‘rain’ that gives fresh energy to a creeper to enable it to grow; and the support that the king received from his ministers and courtiers is like the ‘tree’ that supports the creeper to fulfill its desire to grow and expand.

This metaphor is very apt, because a king is not able to give effect to his wishes without the support of his ministers and counselors. The approval of the guru or the chief priest of the kingdom is alright, but the ground work is done by the ministers, and if they do not fully support the king, then he cannot succeed in any plan, no matter how grand and noble it may be.]

दो०. कहेउ भूप मुनिराज कर जोइ जोइ आयसु होइ ।
राम राज अभिषेक हित बेगि करहु सोइ सोइ ॥ ५ ॥

dōhā.

kahē'u bhūpa munirāja kara jō'i jō'i āyasu hō'i.
rāma rāja abhiṣeka hita bēgi karahu sō'i sō'i. 5.

Then the king instructed them: ‘Whatever the great sage (Vasistha) advises you with respect to the ceremony to anoint Lord Ram on the throne, please consult him and do accordingly¹. (Doha no. 5)

[Note—¹Anointment of a person to the throne of a kingdom is an elaborate exercise. We shall read herein below what the sage advised regarding the preparations to be made in connection with the anointment ceremony of Lord Ram. Refer: Doha no. 6 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it herein below.

The actual process by which Lord Ram would be anointed as the King-Emperor later on, on his return from the forest after the elimination of the demons and the conquest of Lanka, is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 and Chanda line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 12.]

चौ०. हरषि मुनीस कहेउ मृदु बानी । आनहु सकल सुतीरथ पानी ॥ १ ॥
औषध मूल फूल फल पाना । कहे नाम गनि मंगल नाना ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

haraṣi munīsa kahē'u mṛdu bānī. ānahu sakala sutīratha pānī. 1.
auṣadha mūla phūla phala pānā. kahē nāma gani maṅgala nānā. 2.

The great sage (“munīsa”; Vasistha) was very delighted (when the ministers and chief courtiers approached him with king Dasrath’s message, requesting the sage to instruct them regarding the necessary arrangements that are to be made for appointment of Lord Ram as the Prince-Regent of the kingdom).

The elated sage smiled and instructed them as follows:

‘Bring the holy waters from all the sacred places (by sending riders to fetch them)^{1.*} (1)

The learned sage also named individual herbs, roots, flowers, fruits, leaves (particularly the betel leaves) etc. of different varieties that are considered auspicious for such occasions (as appointment of Kings and Regents of a kingdom), and instructed them to collect all of them². (2)

[Note—¹The sage meant that riders should be dispatched to all the places considered holy and of religious importance, and collect water from wells, rivers, ponds and other water bodies at these places, and bring them in pitchers. This collected water would then be sprinkled on the newly appointed King (or Prince-Regent) as part of the rituals to be followed during the ceremony.

²A careful reading of the original text would make it clear that verse no. 1 is a direct quote of sage Vasistha, and verse no. 2 presently, and all other verses that follow herein below, that detail all the items advised by the sage as being needed for the anointment ceremony of Lord Ram are in indirect speech.

Another point is that the sage was privately aware that Lord Ram's anointment would not take place now, that the Lord has to go to the forest in order to accomplish the mandate of eliminating the cruel demons, as well as to bless and grant beatitude to countless sages, ascetics and hermits living in the forest, waiting for the Lord's arrival. So therefore, the actual ceremony for Lord Ram's appointment as the King-Emperor would have to wait. At the same time, this fact had to be kept secret, because if the reality of who Lord Ram was—for the Lord was not an ordinary human being born to become a prince of a kingdom, but the Supreme Being himself who has come down to earth in his form to fulfill many obligations—became known, the demons would flee, and the entire project would come to a naught.

Hence, the sage had to devise a means to ensure that there is delay in holding the ceremony, which would give ample time to put into effect the scheme whereby Lord Ram would be going to the forest on some pretext.

So, the sage ordered that “water from all religious and holy places must be brought for the anointment ceremony”, for the sage knew that these places are far-flung and spread across the land, and it would take a lot of time for the royal servants to go to each of these far away places and come back quickly at a specific time, no matter how fast they traveled. Remember: those were the days when messengers went on horses, and to traverse across rivers, mountains, forests lying in diverse geographical areas and landscapes, across different kingdoms and principalities, some of whom may be friendly and others hostile to the kingdom of Ayodhya, was a very daunting task; it was surely not going to be a cake-walk.

To wit, the main objective of finding a ruse to delay the appointment ceremony of Lord Ram without causing any suspicion in anyone's mind would be comfortably served by ordering the ministers to collect water from far flung places.

Did this scheme of sage Vasistha work? Yes it worked well, for we shall soon read that a lot of time elapsed between the decision of appointing Lord Ram on the throne and the day he was sent to the forest. This is made abundantly clear in Ram Charit Manas when Kaikeyi's maid instigated her mistress to revolt against the plan of Lord Ram's appointment on the throne, citing this time lapse as one of the reasons to convince her that the king was keeping it secret from her in order to avoid her son Bharat from claiming his share and right to the kingdom's throne. Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 19 specifically, and (ii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 17—to Doha no. 19; in general.

*Another pertinent question that arises now is this: What happened to the water collected for the specific purpose of anointment of Lord Ram to the throne of Ayodhya? Well, it was carefully stored and guarded. Some of it was taken by Bharat, Lord Ram's younger brother, who had gone to the forest to seek forgiveness from Lord Ram, and anoint him as the King of Ayodhya right in the forest itself in a symbolic manner before the elaborate ceremony could take place on the Lord's return to the city. Refer: Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 307; (ii) Doha no. 309—Doha no. 310.

The major part of the collected water was kept safely to be used later on during the actual anointment ceremony of Lord Ram when he came back to the city after completing his mission in the forest and eliminating the demons. A close examination of the verses that describe that event would make it clear that the anointment ceremony was held without any delay, as soon as the Lord returned home, thereby implying that the needed holy water from far-flung places was already available, and so were some of the items that are listed by sage Vasistha in the current verses. Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 10; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 12. We will note that the entire exercise of anointment of the Lord on the throne is covered in a single Doha, i.e. Doha no. 12, which hints at the speed by which this ceremony was held. It would not have been possible if all the items needed across the board for such an elaborate ritual were not kept ready and made available at short notice.

At the same time, since some of the items were perishable and could not be stores, such as fruits, leaves, flowers and certain juices, they were brought at the time of the actual anointment. This is clear in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 10-b.]

चामर चरम बसन बहु भाँती । रोम पाट पट अगनित जाती ॥ ३ ॥
मनिगन मंगल बस्तु अनेका । जो जग जोगु भूप अभिषेका ॥ ४ ॥
बेद बिदित कहि सकल बिधाना । कहेउ रचहु पुर बिबिध बिताना ॥ ५ ॥

cāmara carama basana bahu bhāmṭī. rōma pāṭa paṭa aganita jāṭī. 3.
manigana maṅgala bastu anēkā. jō jaga jōgu bhūpa abhiṣēkā. 4.
bēda bidita kahi sakala bidhānā. kahē'u racahu pura bibidha bitānā. 5.

Further, different kinds and varieties of whisks, deerskins, draperies, as well as royal robes and ceremonial clothes made of the finest of wool, silk and cotton, --- (3)

--- Precious gems and all other auspicious accoutrements and items that are needed for the ceremony of anointment of a great King --- (4)

--- All such things as were prescribed in the Vedas for such auspicious occasions were ordered by the sage to be collected.

He also instructed that the city should be magnificently decorated and colourfully decked up in all possible ways, with different kinds of canopies, banners and buntings being put up all over the sprawling city. (5)

सफल रसाल पूगफल केरा । रोपहु बीथिन्ह पुर चहुँ फेरा ॥ ६ ॥
 रचहु मंजु मनि चौकें चारू । कहहु बनावन बेगि बजारू ॥ ७ ॥
 पूजहु गनपति गुर कुलदेवा । सब बिधि करहु भूमिसुर सेवा ॥ ८ ॥

saphala rasāla pūgaphala kērā. rōpahu bīthinha pura cahum̐ phērā. 6.
 racahu mañju mani caukēm cārū. kahahu banāvana bēgi bajārū. 7.
 pūjahu ganapati gura kuladēvā. saba bidhi karahu bhūmisura sēvā. 8.

Trees of mango, betel nuts and banana should be planted all over the city (as these plants and their fruits are considered auspicious during religious ceremonies)¹. (6)

Make magnificent squares and other geometrical patterns, and decorate them with gems of different kinds.

Go and instruct your craftsmen and artisans to start on the work of decorating the market places as soon as possible². (7)

Meanwhile, start the formal worshipping of Lord Ganesh (the deity offered worship first during any religious event), your Guru (i.e. all the elders, moral preceptors and spiritual advisors of every household in the city), and the Deities (i.e. all the deities that are worshipped in the kingdom, both in the royal household as well as by the citizens).

Make arrangements for offering special services to the Brahmins, as they are regarded as living gods on earth (bhūmisura). (8)

[Note—¹This is another hint that the sage wanted to delay the ceremony so that Lord Ram could complete his mission of eliminating the demons by going to the forest before ascending the throne of Ayodhya. How come?

Well, it is obvious that the trees named here won't grow overnight! The same saplings that were sown now would mature to become grown up trees in due time for the actual anointment of Lord Ram, which in our story is 14 years, the period Lord Ram spent in the forest.

²The city of Ayodhya was decorated like a bride in a similar way at the time of arrival of Lord Ram's marriage procession from Janakpur—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 344 along with Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede it; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 347—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 348.]

दो०. ध्वज पताक तोरन कलस सजहु तुरग रथ नाग ।
 सिर धरि मुनिबर बचन सबु निज निज काजहिं लाग ॥ ६ ॥
 dōhā.

dhvaja patāka tōrana kalasa sajahu turaga ratha nāga.
 sira dhari munibara bacana sabu nija nija kājahim̐ lāga. 6.

Go and put up colourful flags, buntings, festoons, banners, ceremonial pitchers; decorate royal horses and prepare the chariots in royal regalia (for the procession that would precede and proceed the anointment ceremony)¹.

All the ministers and courtiers (who were sent by king Dasrath to consult sage Vasistha and make preparations for Lord Ram's anointment²) bowed their heads before the sage in acceptance of his orders, and cheerfully went about to give effect to the instructions they had received. (Doha no. 6)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Doha no. 10-a; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 11.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 5.]

चौ०. जो मुनीस जेहि आयसु दीन्हा । सो तेहिं काजु प्रथम जनु कीन्हा ॥ १ ॥

बिप्र साधु सुर पूजत राजा । करत राम हित मंगल काजा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

jō munīsa jēhi āyasu dīnhā. sō tēhiṁ kāju prathama janu kīnhā. 1.

bipra sādhu sura pūjata rājā. karata rāma hita maṅgala kājā. 2.

Whatever instructions were given by the sage to them (ministers and courtiers), each of them followed the directions given to him on a priority basis. (1)

(Following the sage's advice—) The king (Dasrath) began worshipping Brahmins, sages, seers and Gods on a regular basis¹, and he did all that was deemed auspicious and good for the luck and welfare of Lord Ram². (2)

[Note—¹Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 6 herein above.

²King Dasrath left nothing to chance to ensure a better future for his beloved son Lord Ram. He wished to anoint the Lord as the next king-emperor, and also to make it certain that his son's reign as the sovereign would go down in the realms of history as being the most glorious and famed amongst all the kings and emperors in this world. Naturally therefore, Dasrath put in his heart in observing all the rituals and following all the instructions of his guru, the wise and learned sage Vasistha. He worshipped gods, family deities, Brahmins, sages and seers; he undertook all religious observations and performed all rituals as prescribed in the scriptures—with the sole aim for the welfare of Lord Ram.

But what actually happened; what was the result of all these auspicious exercises done so faithfully and diligently? Well, everything came to a naught; all plans upended and crumbled like a palace of cards—what a wonder that the same son, Lord Ram, for whose welfare Dasrath made so many elaborate efforts was barred from ascending the throne by none else than Dasrath himself; and worst still, he was banished for 14 years to live in exile in the wild forest, attired like a hermit!

One wonders why it happened in the way it did. The answer is found in Ram Charit Manas itself—in (i) Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 171; and (ii) Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 97.

In the first instance, sage Vasistha tells the grieving Bharat that the fiat of Fate and the provisions of Providence as written by the Creator who determines a person's destiny by way of losses or gains, sufferings of death and joys of birth, good name and fortunes as well as the opposite in the form of ignominy and ill-fortunes, cannot be changed or erased by anyone. So therefore it is wise to remain calm and poised, to take things in one's stride, and leave everything in the hands of God.

In the second instance, sage Narad tells the mother of Parvati that since it is written in the destiny of her daughter that she would marry Lord Shiva, who happens to be an ascetic and lives a life in seclusion, away from attachments and free from passions, there is no use in lamenting it, for it cannot be changed.

So, what should one do? One ought to look at the brighter side of things as they stand; one should pray to God and ask the Lord to hold his hand, but never impose anything on Him, for the Lord is like a loving father, and He would never want that His ward should suffer beyond reason. The Lord has the authority and the power to effect a change in one's fate and destiny, but He must be given a free hand to decide how to help the devotee, because while keeping in mind that His devotee is not put to undue sufferings the Lord has also to keep in mind the deeds, good or bad, that the same devotee has done in his previous life and is therefore bound by its consequences. The Lord cannot make null and void the Laws of Nature and Regulations of Creation that He Himself has put into place as the supreme Judge and the Lord-Emperor of this world. Hence, if the devotee nags constantly, it would irritate the Lord in much the same way as any ordinary father who gets upset if his child keeps pestering him for this thing and that, though the father is doing all that is within his means to keep his child happy and well-provided for.

Compare this situation with another child who demands nothing, but instead thanks his father for all that the latter is doing for him. Will the father not begin to love this child more than the one who constantly remains unhappy and unsatisfied with the best his father is doing for him under the circumstances they live in?

So is the case with the supreme Father, the Lord God. If the devotee shows maturity and never demands anything, but rather thanks the Lord for everything the Lord has given him and is doing for him, it is but natural that the Lord would take special care of this devotee. On the other hand, there is the other devotee who always complains and frets, it would make the Lord frown upon him and let him face the consequences of his past deeds in accordance with the set norms of Nature and life.

Later on in the story we shall read that Bharat was having some bad dreams and nightmares ever since his mother and her maid connived and hatched the conspiracy to send Lord Ram to the forest. Bharat performed religious observances and worshipped Lord Shiva in the hope that everything would remain good back home in Ayodhya, because at that time he was away for a vacation at his maternal uncle's place. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 157.}

But every exercise of Bharat proved futile, and the worst came true—for his father Dasrath died, and his beloved brother Lord Ram was sent to the forest, plunging the kingdom into a dark well of gloom and despair. This event once again proves that Fate and Providence are very powerful forces.

So, does this mean that one should not do good deeds and make auspicious efforts; should one leave everything to destiny and live a life with no purpose in it in the belief that what is supposed to happen will happen, so why make any effort or exert oneself? Never; not at all—this is not the intention or the idea behind the observations made herein above as would be abundantly clear if one reads them

carefully. A life ought not to be idly wasted in sloth and laziness; the intention of the above observations is not to unduly get perturbed and anxious, one should not waste energy and peace of mind by fretting and fuming at the result of one's efforts, but bear calmly whatever that comes one's way inspite of the best effort put in by him. This is a practical formula for attaining peace and tranquility in life, because everything can't and won't happen in the way one wants; one ought to be prepared for contingencies and adversities while hoping for the best.

Aside of this, good deeds and a righteous way of leading life do have their positive consequences just like their opposite counterparts create negative results. Good deeds and righteous life brings good name and fame, they give a fine reputation and bestow glory to a person, they grant good fortune and goodwill—and these are great rewards in themselves, while on the other hand, evil nature and unscrupulous way of life brings along ignominy and misfortune.

Similarly, worshipping God and honouring elders, such as a teacher, a parent and a learned person in the society, brings in their blessings and support and good advice, which in turn would stand in good stead for a person; so such efforts are indeed worth their while.]

सुनत राम अभिषेक सुहावा । बाज गहागह अवध बधावा ॥ ३ ॥

राम सीय तन सगुन जनाए । फरकहिं मंगल अंग सुहाए ॥ ४ ॥

sunata rāma abhiṣēka suhāvā. bāja gahāgaha avadha badhāvā. 3.
rāma sīya tana saguna janā'ē. pharakahiṁ maṅgala aṅga suhā'ē. 4.

As soon as the welcome news of Lord Ram's anointment to the throne spread like a wild-fire in the city, it erupted in a spontaneous burst of joy; loud felicitous music, accompanied by songs sung on such celebratory occasions, began playing all over the city of Ayodhya. (3)

Meanwhile, some good omens (or signs of something good to happen) revealed themselves in the person of both Lord Ram and Sita in the form of fluttering of certain parts of their bodies¹. (4)

[Note—¹It is believed that if the right side of a man's body, such as the eyelids, and the muscles of the face and hand, and the left side of a woman's body flutter, then it is a good omen for them. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 231 with respect to Lord Ram's body fluttering; and (ii) Sortha no. 236 (second line) with respect to Sita's body fluttering.}

In the case of these good signs revealing themselves as fluttering of the parts of the bodies of Lord Ram and Sita, there are two obvious implications. From the worldly and mundane point of view of life, these signs would indicate that they were to bestowed with some grand gift, and what else could be expected by the eldest son and heir of a king than the declaration that he is being officially and formally being appointed as the next king of the realm. If Lord Ram would be the king, obviously his wife, Sita, would be the queen.

But the above interpretation is based on a very myopic view of the purpose of Lord Ram taking birth as the son of king Dasrath and a prince of the kingdom of Ayodhya. The Lord was not an ordinary human being, but the Supreme Being coming

down to this world in his form with some divine purpose in mind, which was to liberate the world from the torments unleashed by the cruel demon race and restore peace and order in it, and at the same time to bless countless devotees of the Lord of that era who would get an opportunity to have a personal interaction with him during the time he is with them, and to all the future generations of devotees who would get a chance to recount the Lord's divine story, popularized as the Ramayana, as a means to remember him, which in turn would give them the spiritual bliss, the thrill and the beatitude that they yearn to have. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 122 particularly; and in general the following verses: (ii) Doha no. 186—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 187; (iii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 112; (iv) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 113—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 114; (v) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 120—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 122.}

We will read soon that Lord Ram himself was not pleased with the news that he has been elevated to become the next king of Ayodhya—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 10.

In sharp contrast is the Lord's pleasure when he learnt that he is being sent to the forest, a fact clearly and explicitly mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, in the following verses: (i) Doha no. 41 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede it; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 42; (iii) Doha no. 51; (iv) Doha no. 53 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede it; (v) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 81; and (vi) Doha no. 165—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precede Doha no. 166.

So now, why was Lord Ram so glad that he is being sent to the forest, instead of being made a king of a mighty empire? Come to think of it: what would have been the reaction of any other prince who is suddenly debarred from the throne that rightly belongs to him by the virtue of his being the eldest son of his father, the king? He would revolt and take up arms to fight for his rights, and this may lead to bloodshed too; but the disfranchised prince would never go to exile meekly and cheerfully as Lord Ram did, would he?

The answer is this: Lord Ram was delighted that he would now be able to accomplish the great mission for which he had descended upon earth as a human being, a mission that would have either failed or become very difficult to accomplish once he ascended the throne of a famed and mighty kingdom. The demon king Ravana had some boons*, and it was imperative that all such conditions were fulfilled if he were to be eliminated. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 177.}

In this background, going to the forest as an ordinary hermit as well as an exiled prince with no support whatsoever was a very prudent and practical way to finish the task at hand, for it would enable the Lord to conceal his identity and main purpose. On the other hand, if he became a king-emperor and then decided to slay the demons, then it is quite natural that he would be accompanied by a huge army, which would not only alert the demons who would flee and hide somewhere, but in case they confronted the Lord and waged a bloody war, then there would be unnecessary bloodshed on a wide scale, and a large number of deaths in the army of Ayodhya, which the merciful Lord definitely wanted to avoid—as it was avoidable, if he handled the entire mission alone.]

पुलकि सप्रेम परसपर कहहीं । भरत आगमनु सूचक अहहीं ॥ ५ ॥
 भए बहुत दिन अति अवसेरी । सगुन प्रतीति भेंट प्रिय केरी ॥ ६ ॥

pulaki saprēma parasapara kahahīm. bharata āgamanu sūcaka ahahīm. 5.
 bha'e bahuta dina ati avasērī. saguna pratīti bhēṇṭa priya kērī. 6.

The couple, Lord Ram and Sita, were excited at this omen, and talked with each other, saying—‘Perhaps it meant that Bharat (Lord Ram’s younger brother who had gone to his maternal uncle’s place) is coming back home. (5)

It has been long since he has been gone, and the delay in his coming back was worrying us (about his welfare). So therefore, under these circumstances, such good omens indicate that we shall soon meet the person whom we have so much affection for (i.e. Bharat).¹ (6)

[Note—¹This shows how greatly Lord Ram and Sita loved Bharat. This is the primary reason why the Lord never got angry at Bharat and never harboured any ill-will against him even though the latter’s mother Kaikeyi was the one who was behind the conspiracy that lead the Lord to go to the forest because she wanted her son, Bharat, to become the king instead of his elder brother, Lord Ram.

Under ordinary circumstances, the above reason was enough to cause an eternal souring of brotherly relationship between Lord Ram and Bharat, but it never happened. We shall read by and by that Bharat too shared the same affection for the Lord, and it was a mutual affair.

Now therefore, how much did Lord Ram love Bharat, and how much the latter love the former? We get a hint of the immensity and depth of it when Bharat himself acknowledges it by recalling that when they were yet children and played games, the Lord would lose himself in order to ensure that Bharat wins the game and feels happy. Besides this, the two brothers always stayed close to each other, and never thought that circumstances would separate them. Further, Bharat declares that his welfare and happiness lies only in serving Lord Ram, and not otherwise under any circumstance. These facts are clearly stated in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 260; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 178; (iii) Doha no. 182—to Doha no. 183.

Lord Ram’s trust and faith in Bharat, in his integrity and loyalty towards the Lord, as well as Bharat’s undiluted affection for Lord Ram have been explicitly stressed in Ram Charit Manas on different occasions. For instance, refer to: Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 217; (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 232—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 233.]

भरत सरिस प्रिय को जग माहीं । इहइ सगुन फलु दूसर नाहीं ॥ ७ ॥
 रामहि बंधु सोच दिन राती । अंडन्हि कमठ हृदउ जेहि भाँती ॥ ८ ॥

bharata sarisa priya kō jaga māhīm. iha'i saguna phalu dūsara nāhīm. 7.
 rāmahi bandhu sōca dina rātī. aṇḍanhi kamaṭha hṛda'u jēhi bhāmṭī. 8.

Indeed and in all sooth, who is more close and dear to Lord Ram than Bharat is, so surely these good signs indicated no other thing but Bharat's meeting with Lord Ram very soon.¹ (7)

Lord Ram remembered Bharat at all times and was constantly worried for his welfare just like a tortoise is worried about its eggs². (8)

[Note—¹True, this omen would not go in vain. Lord Ram was sent to 14 long years in exile while Bharat was absent from Ayodhya, and normally it would mean that the two brothers would meet each other only after 14 years when the Lord returned back to the city.

But as it actually happened, it was not the case; for soon Bharat would return home and decide to go to the forest to meet Lord Ram and make all possible efforts to bring him home. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 157; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 183.}

The depth and intensity of Bharat's love for Lord Ram has been repeatedly acknowledged—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 168 along with Chaupai line no. 1 that follow it; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 184; (iii) Chanda line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 201; (iv) Chaupai line nos. 3-6 that precede Doha no. 208; (v) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 218; (vi) Doha no. 222; (vii) Doha no. 238 along with Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede it.

²The tortoise comes out of the water to lay eggs on the sand, cover them with it, and goes away. Yet, at all times it is worried about these eggs and cannot forget about them, though it may not be physically present near the eggs. Similarly, though Lord Ram and Bharat are separated by a great geographical distance at present, for Lord Ram lives in Ayodhya and Bharat has gone to his maternal uncle's place in the kingdom of Kaikeya (from which his mother Kaikeyi derived her name) which is far away, yet Bharat lives close to the Lord's heart and mind because the Lord remembers him constantly and is worried about his welfare.]

दो०. एहि अवसर मंगलु परम सुनि रहँसेउ रनिवासु ।

सोभत लखि बिधु बढत जनु बारिधि बीचि बिलासु ॥ ७ ॥

dōhā.

ēhi avasara maṅgalu parama suni rahamśē'u ranivāsu.

sōbhata lakhi bidhu baṛhata janu bāridhi bīci bilāsu. 7.

On this occasion, when the good tidings of Lord Ram poised for ascending the throne of Ayodhya to be anointed as its king reached the royal household, the entire place was electrified, and its residents (royals, servants, attendants etc.) rose up spontaneously in an outburst of ecstasy and joy, just like the case of the ocean rising up impulsively when it beholds the glorious face of the full moon (causing the high tide)¹. (Doha no. 7)

[Note—¹A similar metaphor is cited in Ram Charit Manas, (i) Baal Kand, Doha no. 262; (ii) Uttar Kand, Doha no. 3-c.

The idea is that as soon as the auspicious news of Lord Ram's anointment reached the palace, there was excitement all around and every member of the royal household became thrilled. All of a sudden, the otherwise calm place was electrified into action as everyone rose up to applaud the news and rejoice.]

चौ०. प्रथम जाइ जिन्ह बचन सुनाए । भूषन बसन भूरि तिन्ह पाए ॥ १ ॥
 प्रेम पुलकि तन मन अनुरागीं । मंगल कलस सजन सब लागीं ॥ २ ॥
 caupāī.

prathama jā'i jinha bacana sunā'ē. bhūṣana basana bhūri tinha pā'ē. 1.
 prēma pulaki tana mana anurāgīṁ. maṅgala kalasa sajana saba lāgīṁ. 2.

Those messengers who were the first ones to convey this good news to the royal household were hugely rewarded (by the queens and other senior royals) by being gifted ornaments and clothes of different kinds. (1)

All the residents of the royal palace (including the queens and their attendants) were thrilled with joy and overwhelmed with emotions even as they began preparation for the grand occasion by arranging platters and vessels needed for such auspicious events¹. (2)

[Note—¹When the news of the arrival of the marriage procession of Lord Ram and his brothers, who were returning home with their respective brides, reached the palace, the queens and other residents of the royal household were overjoyed, and everyone engaged themselves in making elaborate preparations to receive the newly wed couples. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 345—to Doha no. 346.]

चौकें चारु सुमित्राँ पूरी । मनिमय बिबिध भाँति अति रूरी ॥ ३ ॥
 आनँद मगन राम महतारी । दिए दान बहु बिप्र हँकारी ॥ ४ ॥

caukēṁ cāru sumitrām' pūrī. manimaya bibidha bhām'ti ati rūrī. 3.
 ānam'da magana rāma mahatārī. di'ē dāna bahu bipra ham'kāri. 4.

Queen Sumitra (the mother of Laxman) made ceremonial squares on the ground, and decorated them with priceless gems and other decorative items. (3)

The mother of Lord Ram (queen Kaushalya) was overwhelmed with happiness so much that she seemed to be intoxicated with joy. She summoned Brahmins and gave liberal charities to them. (4)

[Note—A very significant observation can be made here, and it is that Kaikeyi, the mother of Bharat and the queen who would later be the cause of Lord Ram being banished to the forest, is not mentioned here to have participated in the celebrations or preparations. In all probability it means that Kaushalya and Sumira had a friendly relationship and they would spend time together in the palace, while Kaikeyi had a

different nature, perhaps she was haughty and arrogant, and preferred to keep a distance from the rest. The probable reason for this arrogance and haughtiness is that she was a favourite queen of king Dasrath as compared to the other two, Kaushalya and Sumitra. This unfriendly nature of Kaikeyi had made others avoid her.

It was Lord Ram who was to be appointed as the king, so it is natural and obvious that news related to this event would be conveyed to the palace where his mother Kaushalya lived. Since Sumitra was very friendly with her and spent a lot of time in her palace, so when the news arrived in the palace both the queens were informed simultaneously. Hence, they joined the celebrations and preparations together.

Remember: In ancient times, chief queens of a king had separate palaces to themselves. In our present case, the three chief queens of Dasrath, i.e. Kaushalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi, in all probability lived in independent palaces. If they liked one another, they were free to go the other's palace; otherwise she would live in her own place. Hence, as we have observed herein above, Kaushalya and Sumitra spent quite a lot of time together because they were friendly, while Kaikeyi preferred to stay aloof.]

पूजीं ग्रामदेबि सुर नागा । कहेउ बहोरि देन बलिभागा ॥ ५ ॥
जेहि बिधि होइ राम कल्याणू । देहु दया करि सो बरदानू ॥ ६ ॥
गावहिं मंगल कोकिलबयनीं । बिधुबदनीं मृगसावकनयनीं ॥ ७ ॥

pūjīm grāmadēbi sura nāgā. kahē'u bahōri dēna balibhāgā. 5.
jēhi bidhi hō'i rāma kalyānū. dēhu dayā kari sō baradānū. 6.
gāvahim maṅgala kōkilabayanīm. bidhubadanīm mṛgasāvakanayanīm. 7.

The goddesses who were regarded as the guardians of the kingdom (grāmadēbi)¹, Gods and Naagas (serpents; representing the celestial Serpent known as Seshnath, one on whose coiled body Lord Vishnu reclines in the cosmic ocean)²—all were offered worship by the queens.

Further, instructions were issued to summon Brahmins, and they be given liberal donations. (5)

All of them were requested—‘Please grant boons or blessings that would ensure good fortune and well-being of Lord Ram.’ (6)

Meanwhile, ladies with sweet voices resembling that of a cuckoo, and whose faces were as beautiful as the full moon and eyes as charming as that of a fawn, sang auspicious songs befitting the occasion. (7)

[Note—¹It was the usual practice that male gods were worshipped by the men in the society, while their female counterparts, the goddesses, were offered worship by the women. Further, there were two distinct types of deities—one type of deity, either a god or a goddess, who was worshipped by an individual or his family, and the second type of deity who was regarded as the patron deity of the whole community, a kind of universal deity to whom the whole village or a community offered common worship.

In the present case, the king and the queens first worshipped their personal god or goddess, then the family deity, and finally the common deity regarded as the

guardian of the whole kingdom. Whenever a king went out on any campaign, e.g. a war or a hunting expedition or a diplomatic mission to another kingdom, he would offer obeisance to all the three types of deities—his personal deity, his family deity, and the common deity of the kingdom.

²Brahmins were offered worship as they represented the gods on earth; the gods were worshipped as they presided over one's destiny and lived in the heaven; and the Naagas were worshipped as they presided over the nether world. In this scheme of things, all three divisions of the world along with their guardians were kept in good humour.]

दो०. राम राज अभिषेकु सुनि हियँ हरषे नर नारि ।
लगे सुमंगल सजन सब बिधि अनुकूल बिचारि ॥ ८ ॥

dōhā.

rāma rāja abhiṣēku suni hiyaṁ haraṣē nara nāri.
lagē sumaṅgala sajana saba bidhi anukūla bicāri. 8.

Every single citizen of the city, both men and women, felt exhilarated in heart and exceedingly delighted when they heard about the news of Lord Ram's anointment as a King.

They deemed it an auspicious development and thought that the Creator is favourably inclined towards them (because this was what they had all wished in their hearts). Hence, they earnestly set about making proper arrangements for that auspicious event¹. (Doha no. 8)

[Note—¹The citizens made similar preparations to welcome Lord Ram and his three brothers when their grand marriage procession returned home from Janakpur, the home of the four brides. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 344 along with Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede it.]

चौ०. तब नरनाहँ बसिष्ठु बोलाए । रामधाम सिख देन पठाए ॥ १ ॥
गुर आगमनु सुनत रघुनाथा । द्वार आइ पद नायउ माथा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

taba naranāham̐ basiṣṭhu bōlā'ē. rāmadhāma sikha dēna paṭhā'ē. 1.
gura āgamanu sunata raghunāthā. dvāra ā'i pada nāya'u māthā. 2.

After that, the king called sage Vasistha¹ and requested him to go to Lord Ram's residence to give him proper advice regarding the developments (so that the Lord becomes aware of the plan to appoint him as a king, and prepare himself accordingly). (1)

When Raghunath (Lord Ram; the Lord of the Raghu's kingdom) heard that his guru (sage Vasistha) has arrived, he went to the gate to receive him warmly by bowing his head reverentially before the sage. (2)

[Note—¹Sage Vasistha played a dual role in the kingdom—he was the chief priest and a royal advisor of the kingdom, as well as the guru of the kings. So therefore, whenever the sage was required to play the role of a chief priest or a royal advisor, he was called by the king, but when he was required to play the role of a guru, the king himself would visit him.]

Both these examples are found in Ramayana. For instance, king Dasrath had visited sage Vasistha when he desired the blessings of his guru and his advice regarding the king's desire to have a son as his heir—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 189.

Again, the king visited the sage when he sought the latter's blessings for appointment of Lord Ram to the throne—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 2—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 4.

In his role as the chief priest of the kingdom who was expected to preside over rituals and act as a special envoy of the king, sage Vasistha was called to the palace of the king. For example, the sage was summoned for the naming ceremony of the newly born sons of king Dasrath—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 197; and (b) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 9, respectively.]

सादर अरघ देइ घर आने । सोरह भाँति पूजि सनमाने ॥ ३ ॥

गहे चरन सिय सहित बहोरी । बोले रामु कमल कर जोरी ॥ ४ ॥

sādara aragha dē'i ghara ānē. sōraha bhām̐ti pūji sanamānē. 3.
gahē carana siya sahita bahōrī. bōlē rāmu kamala kara jōrī. 4.

Lord Ram offered water to the sage to wash his feet, and reverentially escorted him inside the palace. There, the Lord offered due obeisance to the sage and honoured him by offering worship in all the sixteen prescribed modes¹. (3)

Lord Ram, along with Sita (his consort), held the feet of the sage respectfully; the Lord then joined his lotus-like palms before the sage to pay his respects to the latter, and said as follows—(4)

[Note—¹The sixteen methods of offering a comprehensive form of worship are the following: (1) Aavaahan (invoking or inviting the deity to be worshipped), (2) Aasan (giving of seat to the invited deity), (3) Paadya (offering water to wash the feet), (4) Arghya (offering water to wash the hands), (5) Aachaman (offering water to rinse or clean the mouth; a sip of water to clear the throat), (6) Snaan (giving a ritualistic bath), (7) Vastra (offering of new or freshly cleaned clothes to the deity) and Upavita (offering of the sacred thread), (8) Gandha (literally meaning a fragrance, and implying the offering of fresh sandalwood paste), (9) Pushpa (offering of flowers), (10) Dhupa (offering of lighted incense sticks), (11) Dipa (offering of lighted lamps), (12) Naivedya (offering of sweets and fruits along with water), (13) Tambul (offering of betel leaves as mouth-freshener), (14) reciting hymns in the deity's honour—called Mantra Pushpa (offering of flowers in the form of Mantras), (15) Pradakshina (circumambulation), and (16) Namaskaar (offering obeisance by bowing in front).]

सेवक सदन स्वामि आगमनू । मंगल मूल अमंगल दमनू ॥ ५ ॥
तदपि उचित जनु बोलि सप्रीती । पठइअ काज नाथ असि नीती ॥ ६ ॥

sēvaka sadana svāmi āgamanū. maṅgala mūla amaṅgala damanū. 5.
tadapi ucita janu bōli saprītī. paṭha'i'a kāja nātha asi nītī. 6.

Lord Ram said: 'The arrival of a Lord in the home of a servant¹ is an auspicious event for the latter, for it is a harbinger of good fortunes and dispeller of misfortunes. (5)

In spite of this good omen as far as the servant is concerned, it is in fitness of things that the Lord would rather summon the servant when the need arises, instead of taking the trouble to go to the servant's place himself. (6)

[Note—¹Here, the word 'Lord' refers to sage Vasistha, and the 'servant' to Lord Ram. This observation of Lord Ram has a practical application too. If a Master visits his servant, it is but natural that he will bring some gifts or good news for the latter. And during this visit if the Master observes that his favoured servant is in 'want' of something, then a good and conscientious Master would take steps to see that this 'want' is redressed or satisfied at the earliest even though the servant had not particularly made any reference to it during the visit.]

प्रभुता तजि प्रभु कीन्ह सनेहू । भयउ पुनीत आजु यहु गेहू ॥ ७ ॥
आयसु होइ सो करौं गोसाईं । सेवकु लहइ स्वामि सेवकाई ॥ ८ ॥

prabhutā taji prabhu kīnha sanēhū. bhaya'u punīta āju yahu gēhū. 7.
āyasu hō'i sō karaun' gōsā'īm. sēvaku laha'i svāmi sēvakā'īm. 8.

But in the event that thou havest shunned formalities and kept aside thine exalted stature by taking the trouble of paying a visit to my humble abode, I am truly blessed myself, and this place where I live has also been purified (by the dust of thy holy feet). (7)

Oh revered Lord (gōsā'īm)! Please order what I am expected to do, and I would act accordingly. In sooth, that servant is fortunate whose service is accepted by his Lord; for a servant is very lucky whom his Lord deems fit for any service. So therefore, a servant is honoured who serves his Lord well. [To wit, I will fully honour whatever you instruct me to do.]' (8)

दो०. सुनि सनेह साने बचन मुनि रघुबरहि प्रसंस ।
राम कस न तुम्ह कहहु अस हंस बंस अवतंस ॥ ९ ॥
dōhā.

sunī sanēha sānē bacana muni raghubarāhi prasansa.
rāma kasa na tumha kahahu asa hansa bansa avatansa. 9.

When the sage (Vasistha) heard these affectionate words of Lord Ram that were soaked with reverence and marked by sincerity, he was mightily pleased and praised the Lord.

The elated sage lauded Lord Ram and said: 'Oh Ram! There is no wonder that thee wouldst speakest so politely and in such an honourable manner, for indeed thou art like a swan¹ in the illustrious noble royal family to which you belong (hansa bansa avatansa)!' (Doha no. 9)

[Note—¹The 'Swan' is regarded as the noblest and the wisest in the kingdom of birds. The sage says that likewise, Lord Ram is the noblest and the wisest in the family of kings that ruled Ayodhya. Refer also to Chaupai line no. 1 herein below.]

चौ०. बरनि राम गुन सीलु सुभाऊ । बोले प्रेम पुलकि मुनिराऊ ॥ १ ॥
भूप सजेउ अभिषेक समाजू । चाहत देन तुम्हहि जुबराजू ॥ २ ॥
राम करहु सब संजम आजू । जौं बिधि कुसल निबाहै काजू ॥ ३ ॥
caupāī.

barani rāma guna sīlu subhā'ū. bōlē prēma pulaki munirā'ū. 1.
bhūpa sajē'u abhiṣēka samājū. cāhata dēna tumhahi jubarājū. 2.
rāma karahu saba sañjama ājū. jaurṁ bidhi kusala nibāhai kājū. 3.

Lauding the good character, excellent virtues, amiable nature, and courteous manners of Lord Ram, the sage was thrilled as he said --- (1)

'The king has made all arrangements for your anointment as his heir, for he wants to make you the Prince-Regent (and the next King of Ayodhya). (2)

Oh Ram! Please observe self-restraint in all possible ways today (i.e. 'now') so that the creator can successfully accomplish all the necessary objectives and finish the desired task as planned by him.¹ (3)

[Note—¹Sage Vasistha has made a very skillful and clever statement here. His advice is open-ended, for it leaves everything at the discretion of Lord Ram to decide what course of action suits him best. The Lord had two options before him now: One was to accept the offer of the crown of the mighty kingdom of Ayodhya and ascend the throne right away as desired by his worldly father king Dasrath, and the other option was to keep it on hold in order to keep his words and fulfill his obligations towards the gods and mother earth by keeping his promise to eliminate the scourge of the cruel demon race which had been terrorizing the creation with impunity, but to give effect to this it was obligatory upon him to go to the forest where the demons chiefly lived, and travel onwards to their capital at Lanka to uproot the disease from its very root. In addition to it, it was also the Lord's wish to bless and grant beatitude to countless sages, hermits, devotees and other pious souls who were waiting for the Lord to come and visit them. The ascension to the throne could wait for now.

By being vague in his advice, sage Vasistha left both the options open for Lord Ram. But at the same time, the wise sage subtly reminded the Lord of the great mandate and the responsibility that he has to fulfill, which was to free the world from the scourge of the demons, for it was the primary reason why the Supreme Being had to come down to become a human being. This was done at the request of Brahma, the creator, who had made this request to the Lord on behalf of all the gods, mother earth and sages. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 184—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 188.}

Towards this end, the sage advised the Lord to exercise self-restraint in the sense that the latter should not fall prey to the temptation of ascending the throne and enjoying the privileges of a great king before fulfilling the main task at hand—which was to go to the forest and eliminate the terror of the demons, and at the same time to bless the countless sages and hermits as well as ordinary creatures who are awaiting for the time when they would be blessed by the Lord. Becoming a king was not in the priority list of things; it could wait a while.

It must be remembered that sage Vasistha was not an ordinary sage, but a son of the creator Brahma himself. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 48 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it.}

Hence, of all the contemporary sages, it was Vasistha who was privy to the specifics of the grand plan envisioned by his father, Brahma, to get rid of the demons. And, being the chief priest, advisor and confidante of the king of Ayodhya, it fell upon him alone to give proper advice to Lord Ram so that the great mission could be successfully accomplished. Since Vasistha knew of the gravity of the situation and the far reaching consequences of the decision to be made by Lord Ram, both in the terms of the upheaval it would cause in Ayodhya that would result in an unprecedented crisis in the kingdom, as well as the gravity of the situation of missing the chance to eliminate the demons if one would become emotional in order to avoid causing a huge turmoil in Ayodhya. To wit, the choice was not an easy one, for eventually we find that the decision of Lord Ram to proceed to the forest did create a mighty crisis in the kingdom, with king Dasrath dying and the throne remaining vacant for the time Lord Ram was in the forest, for Bharat refused the crown, and the entire city of Ayodhya, that was once vibrant and colorful and envy of all other cities anywhere on earth, being plunged into gloom and despair as if struck with a plague.

In Adhyatma Ramayan of Veda Vyas, Ayodhya Kand, Canto 1, verse nos. 1-5, and 32-40, we read that sage Narad was once sent by the creator Brahma to remind Lord Ram about the mandate of eliminating the demons, at which the Lord replied that he was aware of his duties and responsibilities, and that he would go to the forest willingly soon to fulfill that mandate.

Hence, sage Vasistha's advice and the subtle message it contained only reinforced Lord Ram's determination to put on hold the anointment ceremony for the present, and go to the forest instead. Now what was the need of the hour was to devise a way to make that happen.

Besides the commitment that Lord Ram, in his primary form as the Supreme Being, had made to the gods, mother earth and the sages, who had collectively requested him to descend from heaven and free them from the terror of the demons, there were some other considerations that weighed heavily on the conscience of the Lord. What were these factors? We shall read them shortly in the verses that follow herein below. These factors made Lord Ram rue pensively, and for quite a while he was in a somber mood. {Refer: Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 10 herein below.}

But one thing was certain as far as Lord Ram was concerned, and this helped him in reaching a final decision. He concluded that even if he decided to relinquish the crown and go to the forest, he would not violate sage Vasistha's words at all—for the sage has only conveyed to him the news that the king has made arrangements to anoint him on the throne, but he has not given the Lord any specific instructions to get ready to accept the crown or any other kind of guideline in this matter, except to suggest that he must exercise self-restraint. {Refer: Chaupai line nos. 2-3 which we are currently reading.}

So therefore, Lord Ram had to make up his own mind and decide the course of action he must take, keeping in mind its broad and wider ramifications.]

गुरु सिख देइ राय पहिं गयऊ । राम हृदयँ अस बिसमउ भयऊ ॥ ४ ॥
जनमे एक संग सब भाई । भोजन सयन केलि लरिकाई ॥ ५ ॥
करनबेध उपबीत बिआहा । संग संग सब भए उछाहा ॥ ६ ॥

guru sikha dē'i rāya pahir̃ gaya'ū. rāma hr̥dayam̃ asa bisama'u bhaya'ū. 4.
janamē ēka saṅga saba bhā'ī. bhōjana sayana kēli larikā'ī. 5.
karanabēdha upabīta bi'āhā. saṅga saṅga saba bha'ē uchāhā. 6.

The guru (sage Vasistha) went back to the king (Dasrath) to inform the latter that he has done as requested.

Meanwhile, Lord Ram was confounded in his heart, and he was overcome with a dilemma that caused a lot of dismay to him. (4)

He thought to himself: 'All of us brothers were born at the same time; we had our meals together; we slept and played together. (5)

Our childhood rituals, such as piercing of a child's ear-lobe and wearing of the sacred thread (which are part of the sixteen sacred sacraments ordained for a child in Hinduism), as well as our marriages—all rituals and rites and ceremonies were done together¹. (6)

[Note—Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (a) Birth and childhood days: (i) Chaupai line nos. 1, 4-5 that precede Doha no. 187; (ii) Doha no. 192; (iii) Doha no. 193; (iv) Doha no. 197 along with Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precede it; (v) Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 203; (vi) Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 204; (vii) Chaupai line nos. 1, 4, 6 that precede Doha no. 205; (b) Marriage: (viii) Chanda line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 325—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 326.]

बिमल बंस यहु अनुचित एकू । बंधु बिहाइ बड़ेहि अभिषेकू ॥ ७ ॥
प्रभु सप्रेम पछितानि सुहाई । हरउ भगत मन कै कुटिलाई ॥ ८ ॥

bimala bansa yahu anucita ēkū. bandhu bihā'i barēhi abhiṣēkū. 7.
prabhu saprēma pachitāni suhā'ī. hara'u bhagata mana kai kuṭilā'ī. 8.

In a family of glorious traditions and immaculate reputation, it would be improper that the elder brother should get the crown by excluding the other brothers and undermining their rights.¹ (7)

The Lord (Ram) was very upset and remorseful (that he would get the crown at the cost of his brothers and their joint rights over it) because of his affection for his dear brothers.

Verily indeed and in all sooth, let this loving and affectionate expression of regret and remorse by Lord Ram drive away all sorts of doubts and suspicions and uncertainties in the mind of his devotees (regarding the integrity of the Lord, his sincerity of purpose and commitment to his devotees, of his unwavering love for them, and his desire to reciprocate the love and affection that they have for him—and his promise that he would go out of his way to sacrifice his own interests for the sake of all those who love him and have faith in him)². (8)

[Note—¹Lord Ram's conscience weighed heavily on him. He thought that it would be highly selfish for him to grab the crown and its accompanying privileges on the pretext of his being the eldest of the four brothers. All along in life, the four brothers had shared everything between themselves, from their meals, education, play-things, to even the pavilion under which they got married simultaneously. Say, what would the world say and think about him—that when the time came for eating the cream, Lord Ram forgot his brothers and took the entire pie himself; because the people would surely say that all his love and affection for his brothers were meant for show only!

It would be an ignominious and shameful act for him, thought the conscientious Lord, to accept the crown alone, instead of jointly with his brothers, sharing everything and every responsibility with them in equal measure.

²The idea here is that the devotee must be convinced that his beloved Lord Ram is most magnanimous, benevolent, selfless, caring and loving of all the Lords and Masters in this world, that the Lord would invariably put the devotee's interest on the top of everything else in this world.]

दो०. तेहि अवसर आए लखन मगन प्रेम आनंद ।

सनमाने प्रिय बचन कहि रघुकुल कैरव चंद ॥ १० ॥

dōhā.

tēhi avasara ā'ē lakhana magana prēma ānanda.

sanamānē priya bacana kahi raghukula kairava canda. 10.

On that occasion (while Lord Ram was contemplative and pensive, being overcome with regret and ruing over the matter of his anointment), Laxman came to visit him. He (Laxman) was overwhelmed with joy and happiness (that his dear brother, Lord Ram, is about to ascend the throne and be anointed as the next king of Ayodhya)¹.

Lord Ram, who was like the full moon which gives immense delight to the lily flower (raghukula kairava canda)², welcomed him most affectionately, greeting him by speaking endearing words. (Doha no. 10)

[Note—¹It is but natural that Laxman would learn of Lord Ram's anointment to the throne, as this news had spread like wild fire throughout the city. Laxman loved Lord Ram intensely, and this would be very evident in due course of time when he decided to accompany the Lord to the forest in spite of the fact that he was never asked by anyone to go there. In the forest itself, Laxman had taken care of Lord Ram and Sita like he would have taken care of his own parents. These facts are explicitly mentioned in Ram Charit Manas. Refer: Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 70—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 76 (at the time of going to the forest); (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 90 (Laxman kept awake the whole night to keep vigil as Lord Ram and Sita slept on the ground under the shade of a tree); and (iii) Doha no. 139 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precede it, as well as Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 142 (where we read that Laxman served Lord Ram most faithfully and diligently in the forest).

²The lily flower opens its petals when the moonlight falls on it in the night—as a sign that the flower feels delighted when it sees the moon.

This poetic metaphor is used to imply that all members of the family of king Raghu of Ayodhya were delighted when they saw Lord Ram, and loved him so much that they would cheer up by his mere presence just like the lily cheers up by the mere appearance of the moon in the sky.]

चौ०. बाजहिं बाजने बिबिध बिधाना । पुर प्रमोदु नहिं जाइ बखाना ॥ १ ॥

भरत आगमनु सकल मनावहिं । आवहुं बेगि नयन फलु पावहिं ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

bājahim bājanē bibidha bidhānā. pura pramōdu nahim jā'i bakhānā. 1.

bharata āgamanu sakala manāvahim. āvahum' bēgi nayana phalu pāvahim. 2.

Different types of musical instruments were played in a variety of ways in the city. The extent of jubilation and merriment that filled the whole city of Ayodhya was so immense and profound that the atmosphere of euphoria cannot be described in words¹. (1)

Everyone wished that Bharat should come to the city (from his maternal uncle's place where he had gone on vacation) as early as possible so that he too can get the reward of eyesight (by being able to see the magnificent way the city was being decorated, and enjoy the wonderful way the celebrations accompanying Lord Ram's anointment are being held by participating in them and sharing the joy and happiness of this momentous event)². (2)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 344, and (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 346 which gives us an idea of the sort of musical instruments that were played in the city, and their wide varieties.

²It would be clear from this verse that no one ever doubted Bharat's integrity and brotherly love for Lord Ram. Everyone was sure that Bharat would be overjoyed when he learns that his dear brother Lord Ram would ascend the throne. So it was

definitely a cause of profound shock for the citizens when suddenly they would learn later on that his mother Kaikeyi had prevailed upon king Dasrath to anoint Bharat on the throne and send Lord Ram to the forest for 14 years; it was simply unbelievable and inexplicable.]

हाट बाट घर गलीं अथाई । कहहिं परसपर लोग लोगाई ॥ ३ ॥
 कालि लगन भलि केतिक बारा । पूजिहि बिधि अभिलाषु हमारा ॥ ४ ॥
 कनक सिंघासन सीय समेता । बैठहिं रामु होइ चित चेता ॥ ५ ॥

hāṭa bāṭa ghara galīm athā'īm. kahahīm parasapara lōga lōgā'īm. 3.
kālī lagana bhali kētika bārā. pūjihi bidhi abhilāṣu hamārā. 4.
kanaka siṅghāsana sīya samētā. baiṭhahīm rāmu hō'i cita cētā. 5.

The marketplaces (*hāṭa*), streets (*bāṭa*), homes (*ghara*), lanes (*galīm*) and public squares (*athā'īm*)—everywhere people gathered together in groups and eagerly asked each other—(3)

‘(Say, do you know—) When is the auspicious time tomorrow, how long is it from now (when Lord Ram’s anointment ceremony will be held), and the Creator would fulfill our earnest desire (to see the Lord crowned on the throne)? (4)

When will that morrow come when Lord Ram would be accompanied by Sita as he ascends the golden throne, so as to grant our mind its cherished wish, and make it feel exhilarated?’

[Every citizen had this ubiquitous question on their lips as they eagerly waited for the appointed hour so that they can witness the anointment ceremony of Lord Ram.]¹ (5)

[Note—¹Though by this time it was known to the citizens that Lord Ram would ascend the throne, but the details were still vague, and the time unknown.

But unfortunately, the poor citizens were destined to be gravely disappointed, for Lord Ram would be banished to the forest instead of ascending the throne, giving credence to the age-old adages that “there is gap between the cup and the lip”, that “often times things that seem too good to be true are indeed that way”, that “too much laughter brings tears to the eye”, and “the fiat of Fate, the dictates of Destiny, and the provisions of Providence, are often times whimsical and unpredictable, and therefore unreliable”, and hence, “one must hope for the best but be prepared for the worst”, for “we can know the past, but never the future, for the past is certain while the future is uncertain”.]

सकल कहहिं कब होइहि काली । बिघन मनावहिं देव कुचाली ॥ ६ ॥
 तिन्हहि सोहाइ न अवध बधावा । चोरहि चंदिनि राति न भावा ॥ ७ ॥
 सारद बोलि बिनय सुर करहीं । बारहिं बार पाय लै परहीं ॥ ८ ॥

sakala kahahim̃ kaba hō'ihī kālī. bighana manāvahim̃ dēva kucālī. 6.
 tinhahi sōhā'i na avadha badhāvā. cōrahi candini rāti na bhāvā. 7.
 sārada bōli binaya sura karahim̃. bārahim̃ bāra pāya lai parahim̃. 8.

It was such an irony and a paradoxical situation that while on the one hand the citizens were eagerly wondering when would that auspicious day dawn (in which Lord Ram would ascend the golden throne), the gods, on the other hand, were hoping for the opposite, that some kind of way could be found to foil this event. (6)

The gods were not amused by the celebrations and merriments in Ayodhya; they did not like it just like the case of a thief who does not like a moonlit night¹. (7)

So finally, the gods called goddess Saraswati (sārada—the deity who governed wisdom and speech) and prayed to her most earnestly by falling at her feet repeatedly (to imply how important it was that their request should be honoured by her)². (8)

[Note—¹A thief would prefer a dark night as it suits him well; he feels dismayed if the moon shines brilliantly in the sky, for its light would spoil the thief's nefarious designs to quietly steal under the cover of darkness and then hide himself; moonlight would expose him. But the same moonlight makes the lily flower open its petals in delight—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 10.

So, while the news of Lord Ram's anointment delighted the citizens of Ayodhya, the gods felt gloomy. Why were the gods so gloomy and disappointed at the news that Lord Ram would ascend the throne and be appointed as the Prince-Regent soon? Does it mean they were jealous of Lord Ram? How can one ever expect that the gods, who are supposed to exemplify virtues, would have this negative character in them, especially when it comes to Lord Ram whom they all revered, and who was the Supreme Being and the Lord of all the gods?

No, this is not the case at all. The gods feared that if Lord Ram ascended the throne then the chief purpose of the Lord's coming down to earth as a human being—which was the elimination of the demons ruled by their ruthless king Ravana—would fail. One can argue that if Lord Ram did become a king of a mighty kingdom with an invincible army to support him, it would be easy for him to destroy the demons should he decide to go and fight them. But there were some crucial reasons why the gods, and even Lord Ram, did not favour this plan. First, there were great chances that it would fail, and second, even if it succeeded it was hazardous and would entail unnecessary misery. For, as soon as the demons would learn that the mighty and invincible army of Ayodhya was coming to confront them, it was sure and certain that those amongst the demons who lived in the forests would run away into hiding, while their king Ravana, who lived in Lanka, would either offer stiff resistance and wage a guerrilla-kind of warfare in a clandestine manner which would unleash a trail of blood all over the land as the army of Ayodhya marched from the kingdom to the far away island of Lanka to defeat Ravana, killing thousands of soldiers and even putting the city of Ayodhya to danger from attack of the demons, and in case the demon king stilled failed to stop the advancing army he would offer a peace treaty at the end of a mass bloodshed, which would be difficult for Lord Ram to refuse as it would give the Lord a bad name for not pardoning someone who seeks to surrender and prays for forgiveness—for remember, Lord Ram had a reputation for being merciful, kind and gracious.

Not only this, it would be difficult for Lord Ram to find an excuse to wage a war against Ravana, for till date the demon king avoided any confrontation with Ayodhya and had not teased anyone in the Lord's kingdom.

Another reason is that Ravana had had the boon of invincibility, with the exception that he could only be vanquished by a human or a monkey—refer: Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-5 that precede Doha no. 177. The army of Ayodhya will have no monkey in it, and so the boon granted by Brahma would become untrue.

To wit, the gods were not jealous of Lord Ram ascending the throne and becoming a King-Emperor, but they only wished to postpone this ceremony so that the main purpose of the Lord coming down to the earth could be accomplished first. This fact would be crystal clear later on when these gods had rejoiced, sung and danced, and jubilantly participated in the Lord's crowning ceremony after he had eliminated the scourge of the demons and returned to Ayodhya from Lanka; the gods had prayed and offered their obeisance to the Lord, individually and collectively. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Lanka Kand, (i) Doha no. 112 (Indra, the king of gods); (ii) Doha no. 114-a (gods and Shiva); (iii) Chaupai line nos. 3-6 that precede Doha no. 119 (at the time of departure for Ayodhya); (b) Uttar Kand, (iv) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 11 (at the time of celebrations in Ayodhya); (v) Doha no. 12-b along with Chaupai line nos. 1-4, and Chanda line nos. 1-2 that precede it; (vi) Doha no. 13 (the Vedas and Lord Shiva) (at the time of Lord Ram's anointment as the King-Emperor).}

This divine mission of Lord Ram—to protect the world from the cruelty and torments of demons, as well as to bless and grant beatitude to countless sages, hermits and other pious souls and devotees of the Lord who lived in far-flung places on earth by visiting them personally—was not known to the citizens of Ayodhya, and neither were they aware about the reality of Lord Ram's truthful identity, that he was the Supreme Being in a human form, and not any other ordinary man born to be a king, a prince who would inherit the crown of his father and add his name to the list of great kings of the family.

Hence, while the gods would feel contented when Lord Ram finally went to the forest (apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha nos. 113 and Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 142), the humble citizens would grieve and lament woefully (apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 81).

²The gods were aware that what they proposed would be difficult for Saraswati to comply with, as it would entail her playing spoil-sport and creating a woeful situation that would throw the entire kingdom into a tailspin of grief and lamentations, and at the same time mean a lot of suffering for Lord Ram. Not only this, but history would remember Saraswati in a very bad light, and her otherwise immaculate reputation as being the wise goddess of wisdom, knowledge and erudition would take a severe beating as she would be deemed to have misused her powers and authority over a person's mind to cause havoc and unprecedented misery in Ayodhya by barring Lord Ram from becoming a king, and worse, maneuvering the Lord's banishment to the forest to suffer the life of a wandering homeless person for 14 long years.

The gods were afraid that she would refuse to be a willing party to this evil scheme, so they fell at her feet repeatedly to tell her how urgent and important it was that she intercede on their behalf inspite of the apparent evilness of the action, for

though it seemed evil in the short run but it had a great and positive reward in the long run.]

दो०. बिपति हमारि बिलोकि बड़ि मातु करिअ सोइ आजु ।

रामु जाहिं बन राजु तजि होइ सकल सुरकाजु ॥ ११ ॥

dōhā.

bipati hamāri bilōki baḍi mātu kari'a sō'i āju.

rāmu jāhiṁ bana rāju taji hō'i sakala surakāju. 11.

The gods pleaded with Sarawati: 'Oh gracious mother! Please pay attention to the great problem that confronts us, and considering its gravity and far-reaching consequences (not only for us but for the entire creation as well), we earnestly request you to do something so that Lord Ram relinquishes the throne and goes to the forest instead so that the objective of all the gods could be successfully accomplished.' (Doha no. 11)

[Note—It ought to be remarked here that the gods have not elaborated to Saraswati why they want Lord Ram to go to the forest, what was the objective that they wanted successfully accomplished, and what was the grave problem that they faced. Well, it was not necessary, because Saraswati knew everything, being the goddess who is all-knowing and a deity of knowledge itself.]

चौ०. सुनि सुर बिनय ठाढ़ि पछिताती । भइउँ सरोज बिपिन हिमराती ॥ १ ॥

देखि देव पुनि कहहिं निहोरी । मातु तोहि नहिं थोरिउ खोरी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sunī sura binaya ṭhāḍhi pachitātī. bha'i'um̐ sarōja bipina himarātī. 1.

dēkhi dēva puni kahahiṁ nihōrī. mātu tōhi nahīṁ thōri'u khōrī. 2.

When the goddess (Saraswati) heard what the gods said, she stood dumbfounded and distraught, full of remorse and sadness. She regretted that she would have to play the woeful role (that would bring nothing but grief to the citizens of Ayodhya) just like that of the cold and frosty night of winter plays with respect to a bed of lotus flower¹. (1)

When the gods observed that she was very reluctant to do their bidding, they once again pleaded with her, saying—'Oh mother! Please don't feel dismayed. You will not be accused of any evil doings, nor be subject to any ignominy or infamy². (2)

[Note—¹The lotus flower suffers during a snowy and frosty night of winter, as it shrivels up and dries, and if such nights continue then the lotus will die. Likewise, the people of Ayodhya would suffer immensely, and would be plunged in dark days of gloom and dismay if goddess Saraswati agrees to play the evil role of maneuvering things in such a way that Lord Ram is made to go to the forest.

This thought dismayed her; she rued over the matter and became very pensive.

²The gods said: “Mother, you are well aware who Lord Ram is and the purpose of his coming down to earth; nothing is secret or hidden from you. So therefore, instead of inviting a bad name or reputation for which you fear, you will instead get fame and good name as being the one who had contributed to the cause of the gods and helped Lord Ram to fulfill the divine mission for which the Lord took all the trouble of leaving the comforts of heaven and going down to the mortal world to be subjected to all the problems that are faced by humans.

To wit, you will be playing a noble and exemplary role, and not one of evil. Just imagine what would happen if you don’t help: the demons would remain, Lord Ram would not get to fulfill his mission, and his fame would be limited to being another king of Ayodhya instead of being wide spread and known world-wide, as it surely would be, if he vanquishes the virtually invincible demons lead by their mighty king Ravana. At the same time, so many sages, hermits, ascetics, and other pious souls who spend time in doing Tapa (austerity and penance) in the wilderness of the dense forest would be blessed and granted beatitude by Lord Ram when he visits them. Everyone would be thankful and grateful to you.

Hence, discard your reluctance and cheerfully fulfill your duties to help Lord Ram in his divine mission.”]

बिसमय हरष रहित रघुराऊ । तुम्ह जानहु सब राम प्रभाऊ ॥ ३ ॥

जीव करम बस सुख दुख भागी । जाइअ अवध देव हित लागी ॥ ४ ॥

bisamaya haraṣa rahita raghurā'ū. tumha jānahu saba rāma prabhā'ū. 3.
jīva karama basa sukha dukha bhāgī. jā'i'a avadha dēva hita lāgī. 4.

You know the virtues and character of Lord Ram, that he is immune to being moved by circumstances of joy or grief, for the Lord practices exemplary equanimity, always remaining calm, poised, neutral and dispassionate. (3)

A Jiva (ordinary living being), on the other hand, being a mortal creature, is governed by the laws of creation, and hence is subjected to the feelings or emotions of happiness and sorrows. [To wit, these characters that define a Jiva, an ordinary mortal living being, do not apply to Lord Ram, for he is not an ordinary living being who is known as a Jiva, but the Supreme Being who is beyond such mundane things.]¹

Hence, overcome your reluctance and go to Ayodhya for the good and welfare of the gods.² (4)

[Note—¹The facts stated in these two verses have been reiterated elsewhere too. Refer for instance: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 12; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 116; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 93; (b) Uttara Kand, (iv) Doha no. 85-a; (v) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 91.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 92 along with Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede it, and (ii) Doha no. 93 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it— where this wisdom was given by Laxman to Nishad, the chief of the boatman community.

²To wit, the gods told Saraswati that she need not worry or feel guilty that Lord Ram would feel sad or distraught when the kingdom would be snatched from him and he is forced to a forest exile, for the Lord is immune to such worldly feelings, and he remains unmoved by changing circumstances. And it was true, because the Lord accepted going to the forest most cheerfully as if nothing untoward or sad has happened—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 41; (ii) Doha no. 165 along with Chaupai line no. 1 which follows it.]

बार बार गहि चरन सँकोची । चली बिचारि बिबुध मति पोची ॥ ५ ॥
 ऊँच निवासु नीचि करतूती । देखि न सकहिं पराई बिभूती ॥ ६ ॥

bāra bāra gahi carana samkōcī. calī bicāri bibudha mati pōcī. 5.
 ūm̐ca nivāsu nīci karatūtī. dēkhi na sakahim parā'i bibhūtī. 6.

The gods repeatedly fell at her (Saraswati's) feet, exerting great pressure upon her to comply with their wishes, thereby putting her in a dilemma and a mighty quandary¹.

But finally deciding to act as prayed by the gods (for the larger good of the world), she departed from there to plan how to give effect to their wishes. Meanwhile, she disliked the selfishness of the gods, and pitied their lowly nature and mean-mindedness. She thought to herself: 'Well, indeed the gods' mind is driven by lowly thoughts. (5)

In sooth, they occupy high place in the heaven, but their deeds are very lowly and contemptible. They can't see the rise and prosperity of others (driven as they are by the evil of selfishness)². (2)

[Note—¹She became pensive and pondered over the matter for a while. Should she refuse outright, or should she cooperate with the gods? What would happen if she refused, and what if she accepted the gods' proposal? Well, in the first option, i.e. if she did not do something whereby Lord Ram is sent to the forest instead of being crowned as the king, the elimination of the demons and the getting rid of their scourge would be a difficult task for Lord Ram. In the second option, i.e. if she manages affairs in such a manner that the Lord goes to the forest, it would mean cooperating with the gods as well as helping the Supreme Being fulfill his promise and mandate, though it would also entail a lot of misery being heaved on the unsuspecting and innocent citizens of Ayodhya, on Bharat, Laxman, Shatrughan, and all others related to the family of Lord Ram, for no fault of theirs.

But when a greater cause is at stake, when one has to see the bigger picture, than it is often times wiser to overlook small pricks here and there, and a little bit of inconvenience, because at the end of the day there would be healing, all transient pain and suffering forgotten, and there would be cheer and rejoicing.

She also thought that when Lord Ram vanquishes the might of the demons single-handedly, with only his brother Laxman by his side to represent the whole of might of the great kingdom of Ayodhya, and the way the Lord maintained his poise and calm under the gravest of provocations, such as the throne being snatched from him and his wife being abducted in the forest—the Lord's fame as an upholder of Dharma, as a righteous, courageous, valiant and brave prince, who did not buckle

under adversities but fought to regain his honour and take the side of good against evil, would make him famed and glorious throughout the world and in the realm of history, much-much more than if he is simply remembered as one of the kings of the dynasty that ruled the kingdom of Ayodhya, simply adding his name to that long list.

After seriously pondering over all these matters, and weighing all the pros and cons of the situation, Saraswati finally concluded that it was in the larger interest of the world that the mission of the Supreme Being, who had assumed the form of Lord Ram, should not be hindered, but brought to a successful completion. This would only be possible if Lord Ram relinquishes the option of accepting the crown of the mighty kingdom of Ayodhya and proceed to the forest forthwith. This thought made her resolve that she would not like to go down in history as the goddess who did not help the Supreme Being in carrying out his divine mission and fulfill the promise he had made to the creator Brahma, the gods, mother earth, and a large number of sages who had prayed to him collectively in this regard. Hence, her resolution to do her bit became firmer, and she departed from there to take necessary actions to bring the Great Plan to eliminate the demons to fruition.

²A similar idea, and a similar behaviour of gods, comes to the fore later on in the forest when Bharat had gone to persuade Lord Ram to return home. These selfish gods feared that the ever-obliging Lord would agree, so they once again plan to create a hindrance and stop it from happening. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 217—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 220 when the creator Brahma reassures them not to become unduly worried and become too selfish in their outlook; and again in (ii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 294—to Doha no. 295 when they once again ask goddess Saraswati to prevent Lord Ram from consenting to Bharat's proposal to return home. On this later occasion, however, Saraswati refused to cooperate.

The fact that the gods are selfish is repeatedly asserted in Ram Charit Manas. Refer: (a) Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 220; (ii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 294; (iii) Doha no. 295 and Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes it; (b) Kishindha Kand, (iv) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 12; and (c) Lanka Kand, (v) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 110.

आगिल काजु बिचारि बहोरी । करिहहिं चाह कुसल कबि मोरी ॥ ७ ॥

हरषि हृदयँ दसरथ पुर आई । जनु ग्रह दसा दुसह दुखदाई ॥ ८ ॥

āgila kāju bicāri bahōrī. karihahim cāha kusala kabi mōrī. 7.

haraṣi hrdayam̐ dasaratha pura āī. janu graha dasā dusaha dukhadāī. 8.

Now she began to think of what to do next, what role she ought to play in the whole episode, and to do it in such a fine way that expert poets and bards would be glad to recount her exploits. (7)

Finally, devising a plan in her mind, she cheerfully arrived in the city of king Dasrath (i.e. Ayodhya)¹ as if evil stars, that give pain and grief to all those upon whom they cast their evil eyes, had embodied themselves in her form to descend menacingly on the unsuspecting city and its innocent citizens². (8)

[Note—¹What was her grand plan, and why was she cheerful? Well, her plan was to first corrupt the mind of a maid named Manthara, who was a favourite maid of queen Kaikeyi, and then corrupt the wisdom of Kaikeyi herself. What did she plan to do with this corruption exercise? She planned that once corrupted, Manthara would instigate her mistress Kaikeyi and tell her that anointment of Lord Ram to the throne would be detrimental to her own interests as well as those of her son Bharat. Bharat would be imprisoned because it would be feared that he would script a conspiracy against Lord Ram to grab the crown, and his mother, Kaikeyi would have to serve as a maid of Kaushalya, the mother of Lord Ram, if she wishes to avoid being imprisoned herself. This would terrify Kaikeyi out of her wits, and then she would prevail upon the king, Dasrath, to rescind on his commitment to appoint Lord Ram on the throne. Going further, Kaikeyi would invoke a certain promise that the king had made to her long ago, and insist that Lord Ram go to the forest, and her son be placed on the throne instead. The reader shall read all this in due course of time as he or she progresses with the reading of this fascinating episode.

But the plan would not upset or annoy Lord Ram at all, for the Lord himself was reluctant to accept the throne—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 10.

Further, the fact that Lord Ram would cheerfully relinquish the crown in favour of Bharat and go to the forest willingly is reiterated elsewhere in Ram Charit Manas too. Refer: Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 41—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 42; (ii) Doha no. 51; and (iii) Doha no. 165 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that follow it.

So therefore there was no question that any action of Saraswati would be offending or hurting to Lord Ram. At the same time, she would be helping the Lord fulfill his main mission in this world. To wit, there was no reason why Saraswati should regret or feel ashamed at what she was about to do. This thought made her feel cheerful.

²Indeed, this exactly was what happened in Ayodhya and to its innocent and unsuspecting citizens. The city was plunged in a dark well of gloom and despair; a thick pall of misery and desolation descended upon the otherwise prosperous, thriving and vibrant city. The people were stunned into numbness; distraught, grieving, lamenting and wailing woefully, and feeling utterly helpless and hapless, the poor citizens did not know what to do and what not to do. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 46—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 51.}

The 14 long years of Lord Ram's exile had to be borne by them somehow, albeit with the heaviest of hearts, with the hope that they would see their beloved Lord once again at the end of that period, for they thought that if they died they would be deprived of that happy moment and day when the Lord comes back home from the forest to join them once again, that they would embrace the Lord and once again enjoy his company, and with time the wound would heal. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 83—to Doha no. 86.}

दो०. नामु मंथरा मंदमति चेरी कैकड़ केरि।

अजस पेटारी ताहि करि गई गिरा मति फेरि ॥ १२ ॥

dōhā.

nāmu mantharā mandamati cērī kaika'i kēri.
ajasa pētārī tāhi kari ga'ī girā mati phēri. 12.

Selecting a dim-witted and evil-natured maid named Manthara¹, who was a close confidante and personal assistant of Kaikeyi, the third queen of king Dasrath, to give effect to her designs and to become the scapegoat to bear the brunt of the huge infamy and shame that would definitely befall on anyone responsible for barring Lord Ram from ascending the throne, making him suffer immensely in the forest, and causing horrible grief and distress to all the citizens of Ayodhya, goddess Saraswati corrupted her (Manthara's) mind, turning it crooked, and then quietly went away. (Doha no. 12)

[Note—The reader has already been informed of this plan of Saraswati in the elaborate note appended to verse no. 7 herein above.

A question arises here: Of all those who were close to king Dasrath and Lord Ram, and members of the royal household, why did Saraswati choose Manthara to carry out her plans over others? The answer would be easy to understand when we read about Manthara herself, who she was and what she desired, and for what reason, as follows:-

¹The story of Manthara—She was a daughter of Virochan, the son of Prahalad who was one of the greatest devotees of Lord Vishnu. Once when Virochan vanquished the gods, they went to him disguised as Brahmins, and when the unsuspecting Virochan wanted to give them alms as per traditions, these disguised gods asked him to give them the remaining part of his age (days of life) as donation. The Daityas, the race of junior demons over which Virochan ruled, were thus rendered without a Lord. At that time, Manthara, the kingdom's princess, helped her race to overcome the gods who had played foul with her father. The gods rushed to Indra, their king, but he refused to intervene and kill a woman (Manthara). Then the gods rushed to seek help from Lord Vishnu. Vishnu came to the battle-field and exhorted Indra to slay Manthara with the argument that it is not a sin to kill an enemy in battle. At that, Indra threw his Vajra (thunderbolt) which hit Manthara on the back, just above her buttocks. She fell down wailing as a great hump formed at the place where the Vajra had hit her, deforming her for life. It was from then that she was called a hunch-back. When she returned home, no one supported her or appreciated her sacrifice; on the contrary everyone accused her for being too aggressive that resulted in her being hit with the Vajra and getting a hump as an injury.

Manthara wailed and accused Lord Vishnu of causing this horrible deformity to her by asking Indra, who was initially reluctant to hit her, to strike her hard with his weapon called Vajra. She accused Vishnu of selfishness and always taking sides with the gods in any controversy or confrontation, irrespective of who was at fault. She eventually died.

At the time of death, she had harboured a desire to settle scores with Lord Vishnu for causing her injury and humiliation, and also with her own race, the Daityas, for chiding her instead of praising her valour. She desired that she should take birth and live at a place in close proximity with Lord Vishnu, so that she can seek retribution from the Lord. This is the reason that in her next birth she became Kaikeyi's maid—to get a chance to settle her old grievance with Vishnu, who was now in the form of Lord Ram, as well as the descendants of the Daityas who had chided her, because now they ruled the world in the form of the Demons and their king Ravana.

She derived her name 'Manthara' from the fact that her Mana (mind) was crooked and always restless as she was eager to settle her old enmity with Vishnu and the Demons at the earliest; and also because she a body that was crooked as it was bent at three places.

So we see that goddess Saraswati exploited this secret of Manthara to select her to implement her own design of sending Lord Ram to the forest. It is like the case of "killing two birds with the same stone or arrow"—for, one, Manthara's wish would be fulfilled, and two, so would be the wish of the gods.

Further, since Manthara wished to seek her retribution from Lord Vishnu in the form of Lord Ram, it was obvious that she would put all her wit, energy and powers of persuasion to ensure that Lord Ram is barred from the throne and instead made to suffer hardships in the forest. To wit, she would actively and jealously see that this plan is put into practice and given effect in material terms; she would leave no stones unturned to see Lord Ram going to the forest to suffer himself, and punishing the demons by killing them in the bargain. Thus, it is again the case of "killing two birds with the same stone or arrow" as far as Manthara was concerned!

Manthara is derided as being crooked, and of low wit and intellect because such people look at things from a negative perspective, and have a shallow, selfish and myopic point of view; they do not bother to think further than their own vested interests, nor do they have the depth of wisdom or ability to judge the consequences of any action they take or decision they make. It is foolhardy and imprudent for another person to rely upon the advice of such dumb people. In our present case, Kaikeyi represents the former, and Manthara the latter sort of people. Kaikeyi ought to have known Manthara's character well, as the latter was her favourite maid and had come with her from her parent's place at the time of her marriage with Dasrath. So therefore, Kaikeyi had erred gravely in falling into the trap of believing Manthara and following her advice—that caused all the turmoil that followed in Ayodhya.

Why was Kaikeyi selected to play the role of a spoil-sport and Devil, inspite of the fact that she loved Lord Ram immensely (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 15). Well, there are two stories regarding it as follows:-

(a) According to one ancient story, it so happened that once Vishwaavasu, the king of Gandharvas (who are singers and musicians of heaven), came with his retinue to Ayodhya and began showcasing his talent. Everyone was mesmerized by his singing, and the four children, Lord Ram and his brothers, Bharat, Laxman and Shatrughan, were so amused that they went to sit on the lap of the celestial singer. The boys were so amused and charmed by the singer and his songs that they would not leave his company. Vishwaavasu continued singing, as he did not want to stop without the permission of Indra, the king of Gods and his Lord. This annoyed Kaikeyi as she feared that the children would be subjected to some kind of black magic or ill charm. So she called Indra some bad names. Indra was peeved, and vowed to punish her. It was this reason why Kaikeyi was selected to bear the brunt of the ignominy of being instrumental in sending Lord Ram to the forest, death of her husband Dasrath, and creating unprecedented crisis and misery in Ayodhya.

(b) The other story is related to Manthara, and is this: Once upon a time, Kaikeyi's father, the king of Kaikaya, the kingdom after which she got her name 'Kaikeyi', went to hunt and killed a male deer. His partner, the female deer, was distraught, and weeping gravely she went to report the ill fortune to her own mother. The latter went to the king and pleaded with him to give the male deer back, saying

that he was her son-in-law and she would revive him as she had some miraculous powers by the virtue of her being a female Yaksha (a sort of demi-god). The king did not want to part with the game he had hunted, so he drew his sword to kill the deer's mother-in-law. At the time of death, she cursed him that one day she would kill the king's son-in-law as he had killed her son-in-law, the male deer. Later on, this female deer became Manathra, who became instrumental in the death of king Dasrath, the 'son-in-law' of the king of Kaikaya, as his daughter Kaikeyi had married Dasrath. Dasrath had died grieving for Lord Ram (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 155). Since the entire scheme was hatched by Manthara, it is said that she fulfilled her vengeance against the father of Kaikeyi who had killed her son-in-law, the hunted deer, in her previous life.

So we see, Saraswati found an easy, convenient and ingenious method to carry out the commission given to her by the gods by selecting Manthara to implement it, because after quickly surveying all the candidates who could be of help, Saraswati zeroed down on this crooked maid as the latter already harboured a long-standing ill-will and animosity against Lord Vishnu, and by extension against his human form, Lord Ram, as well as her mistress Kaikeyi's father, as we shall read herein below. Since Manthara was the favourite handmaid of Kaikeyi, the queen who herself was the favourite of king Dasrath, so by having Manthara on her side and cooperating with her would make the formidable task of Saraswati very easy, as once Manthara falls in line she would cause a domino effect by roping in Kaikeyi, as she loved Lord Ram immensely and her being part of the scheme was crucial for its success as this queen could then prevail upon Dasrath to prevent Lord Ram from ascending the throne and insist in his going to the forest instead, and with this last hurdle removed, the rest would be a cake walk.

Besides, Saraswati would not need much effort to persuade Manthara, other than making the latter aware of an opportunity that would give her a chance to settle old scores by simply enabling or tickling the relevant part of her brain and its nerves that pay attention to detail of things and deduce their meanings, as it would help to make her aware of this opportunity and then focus on how to exploit it to her purpose by employing all the skills of cunning maneuvering that she possesses.]

चौ०. दीख मंथरा नगरु बनावा । मंजुल मंगल बाज बधावा ॥ १ ॥

पूछेसि लोगन्ह काह उछाहू । राम तिलकु सुनि भा उर दाहू ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

dīkha mantharā nagaru banāvā. mañjula maṅgala bāja badhāvā. 1.

pūchēsī lōganha kāha uchāhū. rāma tilaku suni bhā ura dāhū. 2.

When Manthara saw that the city of Ayodhya was being decorated and music was played everywhere, she wondered about the cause of all these celebrations. (1)

She asked the people the reason for all such festivities, and when informed that it was because Lord Ram was to be anointed to the throne as the Prince-Regent, it caused immense heart-burn and aroused intense jealousy in her¹. (2)

[Note—¹Manthara's mind was already crooked and biased: the events of her previous life played in the background to stoke her desire for revenge, as we have already read in the note appended to the earlier verse.

Further, Saraswati had already sown the poison of corruption into her mind.

Besides this, there was another reason why Manthara disliked Lord Ram and became jealous of the news of his ascension to the throne. According to Agni Puran, it so happened that when Lord Ram was a child, he had once mocked Manthara for her hump, and in jest had dragged her on the ground to poke fun at her. Manthara took this childish behaviour seriously and vowed to take revenge some day. That time had come now. So she became annoyed to hear that Lord Ram, who had once insulted her, would become the next king.

To wit, goddess Saraswati zeroed on Manthara as she concluded that since this old hunch-back maid was already crooked, not only in the body but also in the mind, and harboured secret animosity with Lord Vishnu and Kaikeyi's father too as is evident from the three stories narrated herein above, she would fit the bill perfectly, to the dot. Others may need persuasion to cooperate with Saraswati, and they may later relent and decide to betray her cause by letting the secret known, but Manthara would be too willing to see the plan through.]

करइ बिचारु कुबुद्धि कुजाती । होइ अकाजु कवनि बिधि राती ॥ ३ ॥

देखि लागि मधु कुटिल किराती । जिमि गवँ तकइ लेउँ केहि भाँती ॥ ४ ॥

kara'i bicāru kubud'dhi kujātī. hō'i akāju kavani bidhi rātī. 3.

dēkhi lāgi madhu kuṭila kirātī. jimi gavam̐ taka'i lē'um̐ kēhi bhām̐tī. 4.

When informed about the reason for the celebrations, the wicked woman of a lowly birth (kubud'dhi kujātī) was overcome with envy, and pondering over the matter she wondered how the plan could be derailed and the cart upended within the short period of that night itself (because if the next day dawned and nothing was done by then, then it was a certainty that king Dasrath would crown Lord Ram on the throne without fail, and it would be too late to disrupt the ceremony). (3)

Her vile and greedy nature could be likened to that of a low-caste wily tribal woman who sees a honeycomb full of honey hanging from a tree, and eyeing it greedily she wonders how she could stealthily grab the honey in the easiest possible way (without being stung by the bees), and pondering over the matter devises a scheme to give effect to her desires¹. (4)

[Note—¹The tribal woman, when she sees a honeycomb full of dripping honey, becomes greedy, and she devises a plan to get the honey for herself by burning something right below the comb so that the poor bees are either chased away due to heat and smoke of the fire, or are killed by the heat of the flames, thereby clearing the way for this selfish woman to go and grab the treasure of honey stored in the honeycomb.

Here, Manthara is likened to this greedy and deceitful tribal woman because of her jealousy that drives her to devise a vile scheme to create some hindrance in the anointment of Lord Ram and stop the celebrations, for it would create untold misery and unprecedented crisis in Ayodhya. A great turmoil overtook the city and plunged it

and its inhabitants into whirlpool of intense and endless chain of grief, gloom and distress, which climaxed with the death of king Dasrath and the throne remaining vacant for 14 long years (because Bharat refused to accept the crown).]

भरत मातु पहिं गइ बिलखानी । का अनमनि हसि कह हँसि रानी ॥ ५ ॥
ऊतरु देइ न लेइ उसासू । नारि चरित करि ढारइ आँसू ॥ ६ ॥

bharata mātu pahim ga'i bilakhānī. kā anamani hasi kaha haṁsi rānī. 5.
ūtaru dē'i na lē'i usāsū. nāri carita kari ḍhāra'i āṁsū. 6.

[Having decided that she would now revenge her old grievance with both Lord Ram by debarring him from the throne and making him suffer in the wilderness of the forest, as well as with Kaikeyi's father by making his daughter Kaikeyi a widow, the wily, selfish and crooked-minded Manthara went to meet her mistress to give effect to her nefarious designs.]

Manthara went to the mother of Bharat (i.e. Kaikeyi, who was also her mistress) with a sullen and grave face as if something potentially dangerous and harmful was about to happen. Once there, Manthara lamented and sighed woefully, alarming Kaikeyi, who smiled (at her maid's theatrical behaviour of gloom and despair, because probably she was accustomed to her maid's nature of making faces) and asked her what the matter was that she was in such a distressed state.

[Quoth Kaikeyi to Manthara: "I wonder what ails thee; what is the matter with thee that prompts thou to make such a grave face and be subjected to such extreme distemper of mind and agitation of body, for thou breathest so heavily in a doleful manner as if thine ghost is about to abandon thee. Prithee, dost tell me frankly what is that which troubles thee so extremely that thou can't stop lamenting and grieving. Who hast offended thee, or hast thou gone around in thine usual mischievous manner, rambling nonsense, that may have irritated someone who rebuffed thee and shewn thee thine proper place. Come, come out in the open and tell me the matter."] (5)

Manthara meanwhile, to impart gravity and importance to what she was about to say (so that the dagger hits deep), did not reply, but continued to take deep breaths and shed tears of grief as she groaned, sighed and lamented woefully.¹ (6)

[Note—¹The reader would observe the dramatic way Manthara acted, that was done in order to lend gravity and a sense of urgency to the matter that was so alarming as to disturb him so much that she sobbed and wailed beyond comfort. Obviously, Kaikeyi too became alarmed; she wondered as to what so serious a thing it could be that would reduce her maid to such a distressed condition so suddenly. Manthara wanted precisely this to happen; she wanted to arouse Kaikeyi's sympathy for her, and make her more attentive and receptive to her complaints, before striking with the dagger and ensuring that it is driven down to its hilt.]

हँसि कह रानि गालु बड़ तोरें । दीन्ह लखन सिख अस मन मोरें ॥ ७ ॥
तबहुँ न बोल चेरि बड़ि पापिनि । छाड़ि स्वास कारि जनु साँपिनि ॥ ८ ॥

hamśi kaha rāni gālu baṛa tōrēm. dīnha lakhana sikha asa mana mōrēm. 7.
tabahum̃ na bōla cēri baḍi pāpini. chāṛa'i svāsa kārī janū sām̃pini. 8.

The queen (i.e. Kaikeyi) laughed and said: 'You are unruly and accustomed to speak too much, as you have a big mouth and are babbling unnecessarily.

So it appears to me that Laxman has given you some bitter lesson (by punishing you in the form of punching or smacking you, or even scolding you) for something impertinent or irreverent that you may have said that might have annoyed him.¹ (7)

Even then, the wicked maid servant did not speak, but continued to sigh and breathe heavily like a female serpent hissing agitatedly². (8)

[Note—¹Kaikeyi guessed that it is quite possible that Manthara had said something offending at which Laxman became angry and punished her, because the queen was aware of her maid's wicked nature and the habit of speaking out of turn in a provocative manner, which ruffled emotions and caused tension amongst members of the household quite frequently.

²An angry female serpent is extremely dangerous, and when she decides to bite someone to kill, she would do it anyhow. This was the way Manthara acted; she was bent on carrying out her wish and would not let the prey, Kaikeyi, escape by making light of the matter.

Further, Kaikeyi's initial response of taking the matter lightly as is evident in her smiling and laughing at Manthara's tantrums, and also implying that her maid was used to such drama because she talks too much and continuously causes problems for herself by insulting others, aggravated the latter's anger and stoked her desire for vengeance.]

दो०. सभय रानि कह कहसि किन कुसल रामु महिपालु ।
लखनु भरतु रिपुदमनु सुनि भा कुबरी उर सालु ॥ १३ ॥
dōhā.

sabhaya rāni kaha kahasi kina kusala rāmu mahipālu.
lakhanu bharatu ripudamanu suni bhā kubarī ura sālu. 13.

But when Manthara did not answer her, but continued to wail and grieve uncontrollably, Kaikeyi at last became alarmed, because she wondered that surely it was something serious and a matter of concern that she could not guess.

Kaikeyi implored Manthara to speak up and tell what's worrying her so much: 'Come on, why aren't you speaking? Is everything alright with Ram, the King (i.e. Dasrath, her husband), Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan (ripudaman)? What is the matter; why don't you speak and say that everything's fine?'

When the crooked woman with the hunch back (kubarī)¹ heard this, it further stoked the fire of jealousy in her heart as if a dagger was driven through it (which made her very agitated). (Doha no. 13)

[Note—¹It is interesting to note the word that has been used here for Manthara; it is “kubarī”—meaning one with a huge lump or large hunch on the back which makes the person look crooked, deformed and ugly. The word describes the nature and character of Manthara aptly, for she was crooked and evil by nature, her mind always dwelt on things that were reprehensible, vile and evil, and she was like an evil star or bad omen wherever she went, very much like the comet in the sky as it also has a bent or crooked tail, and traverses in an unconventional path through the sky. The comet is regarded as a harbinger of evil as no auspicious work is done in its presence.]

चौ०. कत सिख देइ हमहि कोउ माई । गालु करब केहि कर बलु पाई ॥ १ ॥

रामहि छाड़ि कुसल केहि आजू । जेहि जनेसु देइ जुबराजू ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kata sikha dē'i hamahi kō'u mā'ī. gālu karaba kēhi kara balu pā'ī. 1.
rāmahi chāḍi kusala kēhi ājū. jēhi janēsu dē'i jubarājū. 2.

The wicked and crooked Manthara replied: ‘Oh my Mistress, who is like a mother for me (mā'ī)¹! Pray, who will teach me anything; on whose strength would I boast and go about talking with a big and loud mouth²? (1)

Who has a greater fortune today and who is luckier than Lord Ram to whom the king is giving the gift of the throne by making him the Prince-Regent of the kingdom³? (2)

[Note—¹The word “mā'ī” literally means a ‘mother’, but here Manthara means that her mistress Kaikeyi is like a mother for her as she always takes care of her maid’s interests like a mother looks after the welfare of her daughter. Manthara has an evil design hidden in her mind, so she plays her cards skillfully to win over Kaikeyi and gain her trust and confidence, by first invoking Kaikeyi’s affection for her, as well as stress her own allegiance and devotion for her mistress.

The next statement of Manthara was intended to tell Kaikeyi that the cause of her distress has got nothing to do with anything personal, but she was agitated as the matter at hand would adversely affect her motherly patron, i.e. Kaikeyi.

²Manthara refers to what Kaikeyi tells her in Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 13 herein above—regarding ‘Laxman teaching her a lesson for some impertinence of hers’.

³The cunning Manthara endeavours to sow the seed of jealousy and dissention in Kaikeyi’s heart. By her first statement which is followed immediately by the news of the king appointing Lord Ram to the throne, Manthara clearly means to say— “how dare can I go about talking and teasing others in the household, because one dares to do this only when one has a patron to rely upon for protection and support in the case of a flare-up, for, as the situation stands, my only patron Kaikeyi would be herself in dire straits, needing protection and support sooner rather than later, because her son Bharat has been by-passed by his own father king Dasrath who has plans to appoint Lord Ram as the next King. Should this happen, surely Bharat’s mother (Kaikeyi) would be relegated to a secondary position, because, obviously, Lord Ram’s mother,

Kaushalya, would be elevated to the senior-most position in the royal hierarchy by the virtue of her being the ‘Mother of the King (Lord Ram)’.”]

भयउ कौसिलहि बिधि अति दाहिन । देखत गरब रहत उर नाहिन ॥ ३ ॥
देखहु कस न जाइ सब सोभा । जो अवलोकि मोर मनु छोभा ॥ ४ ॥

bhaya'u kausilahi bidhi ati dāhina. dēkhata garaba rahata ura nāhina. 3.
dēkhahu kasa na jā'i saba sōbhā. jō avalōki mōra manu chōbhā. 4.

Forsooth, the Creator has been very favourable to Kaushalya (Lord Ram's mother). She feels so proud that one ought to see her to believe how her pride has increased to such an extent that she can no longer contain it in her heart. [To wit, Kaushalya has become overtly haughty and proud because her son would soon become a king.] (3)

In case you (Kaikeyi) don't believe me and think I am gone crazy, go and see for yourself the way the city of Ayodhya has been decorated (for the anointment ceremony of Lord Ram), the reason for the distress and agitation in my Mana (heart and mind)¹. (4)

[Note—¹Manthara said to Kaikeyi: “You would ask me ‘why should I be so worried if Lord Ram becomes a king?’

Well, I foresee danger for your future, and this is the thing which is worrying me. As for me, I am a maid, born to serve others, and be subject to ridicule due to my deformed body. But at the same time, I am loyal to you and have great affection for you, as I am from your maternal home and have seen you grow up from a child to become a queen. Besides this, I am privy to many gossips doing the rounds of the palace, which in a hushed tone indicate that Bharat would be either imprisoned or given some inconsequential duty in the kingdom, while thou wilt have to serve Kaushalya as her maid. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precede Doha no. 16 herein below.}

Anything which would be harmful for thee naturally worries me, and this is the reason why I am so utterly distressed.”

In the following verses, Manthara puts forward her arguments and logic to convince Kaikeyi that things are looking bad for her interests.]

पूतु बिदेस न सोचु तुम्हारे । जानति हहु बस नाहु हमारे ॥ ५ ॥
नीद बहुत प्रिय सेज तुराई । लखहु न भूप कपट चतुराई ॥ ६ ॥

pūtu bidēsa na sōcu tumhārēm. jānati hahu basa nāhu hamārēm. 5.
nīda bahuta priya sēja turā'ī. lakhahu na bhūpa kapaṭa caturā'ī. 6.

Your son (Bharat) is abroad (for he has been sent to his maternal uncle's place). You are not worried about anything (nor can you see the deceit being played upon you) because you are so confident in yourself in the thought that the king (Dasrath) is under your influence (and loves you). (5)

You are fond of sleeping comfortably on a cushioned bed with a pillow under your head! Verily, you are so lazy and given to indolence that you could not exert your mind to see through the deceit and cunning that is being played upon you by the king (your husband, Dasrath!)¹. (4)

[Note—¹Quoth the wily Manthara with a wicked smile and skewed eyebrows: “Thou havest become so slothful that thine time is spent in sleeping and lazing. You did not observe that the king, who you believe favours you, kept the plan to appoint Lord Ram as the next king secret from you; he gave no hint to you of it yet, did he? In order to ensure that Bharat should not create any obstacle in the plan, the king sent your son to his maternal uncle’s place on the pretext of a courtesy visit or a long vacation. The entire plan was done in a hush-hush manner, very secretly and surreptitiously; no one came to inform you, is it not true? The whole city is being decked up, and you have not bothered to wonder what the cause of such celebration is. Woe to your intellect and eclipsed wisdom! And here when I come to inform you about this nefarious design of your own husband, who is acting in connivance with your bete noire Kaushalya, you laugh at me and ridicule me. I tell you that if the king goes ahead with his plans, then you will have to become a maid, and your son a prisoner. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 17—to Doha no. 19.}

Well, come to think of it, oh mine mistress, doth thou wot naught that even the other queen Sumitra and her son Laxman, who is a favourite of Lord Ram, know of his anointment, for they have been kept informed, and are participating in the celebrations (refer: (i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 7; and (ii) Doha no. 10 respectively).

But unfortunately, the king and his advisors thought it wise to keep thee out of the loop. Couldn’t the king send a messenger to inform thee of his decision if he had no evil intentions in his heart? Doth thou not have the basic intelligence to see through all this?”]

सुनि प्रिय बचन मलिन मनु जानी । झुकी रानि अब रहु अरगानी ॥ ७ ॥
पुनि अस कबहुँ कहसि घरफोरी । तब धरि जीभ कढ़ावउँ तोरी ॥ ८ ॥

sunī priya bacana malina manu jānī. jhukī rāni aba rahu aragānī. 7.
puni asa kabahum̐ kahasi gharaphōrī. taba dhari jībha kaṛhāva'um̐ tōrī. 8.

When Kaikeyi heard these words of Manthara, that were sweet to hear and ostensibly meant to serve her interests, yet she could perceive the wickedness in her maid’s heart.

Annoyed at the crooked hunch backed maid’s impertinence and impudence, Kaikeyi bent over in aroused passions, and severely reproached her, saying angrily: ‘Oh you vile woman; hold your tongue and mind what you say. (7)

Oh you scoundrel who intend to break our home into fragments (gharaphōrī)! If you at any time repeat such insinuations and try to sow seeds of rift and dissention in the family, if you durst ever try to cause friction amongst the members of our family, beware of it, for I shalt get thine tongue pulled out! (8)

दो०. काने खोरे कूबरे कुटिल कुचाली जानि ।
तिथ बिसेषि पुनि चेरि कहि भरतमातु मुसुकानि ॥ १४ ॥

dōhā.

kānē khōrē kūbarē kuṭila kucālī jāni.
tiya bisēṣi puni cēri kahi bharatamātu musukāni. 14.

Indeed it is well said that a one-eyed person (kānē), a lame person (khōrē), as well as one who has a hump at the back (kūbarē)—all of them are crooked by their inherent nature, for being evil and jealous is part of their character. And amongst such persons, this adage holds greater truth with respect to a woman, and if that woman happens to be a maid, it is worse.'

Having sternly admonished Manthara in the above said manner, Kaikeyi smiled and became quiet. (Doha no. 14)

[Note—It ought to be remarked that till this point Kaikeyi is still in her senses, as she could see through Manthara's wickedness and evil designs. Kaikeyi accuses the maid of trying to break cordial relationships in the family by sowing seeds of suspicion and doubts. Kaikeyi had known Manthara's wicked nature for long, from the days when she was at her parent's home before her marriage with Dasrath. Kaikeyi may have often taken Manthara to task for the latter's mischievous acts, as is evident when the queen guessed that perhaps Manthara's distress was due to her causing some nonsense that may have provoked Laxman to take her to task—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 13 herein above.

So therefore, it seemed a routine matter for Kaikeyi that Manthara would make faces and grumble. That is why after scolding her, Kaikeyi smiled and kept quiet.

But Manthara was not to be so easily stopped; she persisted with her objective and continued her attempts to arouse Kaikeyi's passions, as we shall soon find out.]

चौ०. प्रियबादिनि सिख दीन्हिउँ तोही । सपनेहुँ तो पर कोपु न मोही ॥ १ ॥
सुदिनु सुमंगल दायकु सोई । तोर कहा फुर जेहि दिन होई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

priyabādinī sikha dīnhi'um̐ tōhī. sapanēhum̐ tō para kōpu na mōhī. 1.
sudinu sumāṅgala dāyaku sōī. tōra kahā phura jēhi dīna hōī. 2.

[After the initial outburst of natural indignation, Kaikeyi soon calmed down, and then she said to Manthara in a more amiable tone to sooth her trusted maid's feelings which may have been roughed on the wrong side by her mistress' scolding.]

Kaikeyi further said to Manthara: 'Oh dear Manthara, who has spoken things meant for my good (priyabādinī), what I have just told you is by way of an advice; I am never angry at you even in my dreams¹. (1)

Verily indeed, that day would be most auspicious and a harbinger of all good fortunes when what you say does happen.

[To wit, the day when Lord Ram is anointed on the throne as the Prince-Regent would truly be the day for rejoicing and celebrations, for there can be no better day than that; there can be nothing more auspicious and fortunate than that event of Lord Ram's appointment to the throne.]² (2)

[Note—¹This assurance of Kaikeyi was her undoing, for now Manthara would be emboldened to carry forward her agenda. Had Kaikeyi stopped from trying to pamper Manthara after scolding her, in order to assuage the latter's feelings of hurt caused by the former scolding her for trying to create mischief in the family, things would have ended there. But it was not to be so; for the fiat of Fate and provisions of Destiny dictated something else.

Kaikeyi and Manthara were very close to each other by the virtue of their long association, because Manthara had been Kaikeyi's maid even during her days at her parental home, much before her marriage with king Dasrath, and later on Manthara came to Ayodhya with her mistress to be her constant companion and handmaid at her in-laws place. Kaikeyi was of such a proud nature that she thought herself superior to other queens, and would rarely spent time together with her sister-queens. Being a loner and spending her time in self-imposed isolation in her own palace, Kaikeyi would use Manthara to keep abreast of the gossip in the royal household.

So therefore, after initial anger at what her trusted aid and spy had to say, Kaikeyi gave it a second thought and decided that it would not be in her best of interests to annoy and antagonize Manthara, for then she would be unable to keep herself informed about the routine intrigue and gossip that are so common in royalty. Hence, Kaikeyi immediately took steps to undo the damage—by speaking affectionately with Manthara, and assuring the latter that she cannot be angry at her.

²This shows how greatly Kaikeyi loved Lord Ram—refer also to: Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 15 herein below where Kaikeyi explicitly says so.]

जेठ स्वामि सेवक लघु भाई । यह दिनकर कुल रीति सुहाई ॥ ३ ॥
राम तिलकु जौं साँचेहुँ काली । देउँ मागु मन भावत आली ॥ ४ ॥

jēṭha svāmi sēvaka laghu bhā'ī. yaha dinakara kula rīti suhā'ī. 3.
rāma tilaku jaur̥m sām̐cēhum̐ kālī. dē'um̐ māgu mana bhāvata ālī. 4.

It is a respected and pleasant tradition in the illustrious royal family of Sun Race (dinakara kula) that the eldest son ascends the throne of the kingdom, and his younger brothers serve him. (3)

Under this circumstance, therefore, if what you say that Lord Ram would be anointed on the throne as a Prince-Regent¹ is true, then come, since it is exceptionally welcome news, my dear friend (ālī), you should ask what you want to have as a gift for conveying this excellent news to me, and thou shalt have it!² (4)

[Note—¹Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 31. Here, king Dasrath has justified his decision of appointing Lord Ram to the throne as he was the eldest son, and his anointment was fully in accordance with established traditions.

²Anyone who brought good news was amply rewarded. This is evident elsewhere also in Ram Charit Manas. For instance, refer to: Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 8.]

कौसल्या सम सब महतारी । रामहि सहज सुभायँ पिआरी ॥ ५ ॥
मो पर करहिं सनेहु बिसेषी । मैं करि प्रीति परीछा देखी ॥ ६ ॥

kausalyā sama saba mahatārī. rāmahi sahaja subhāyam' pi'ārī. 5.
mō para karahim sanēhu bisēṣī. main' kari prīti parīchā dēkhī. 6.

Lord Ram respects and loves all of us (i.e. myself and my sister-queen Sumitra) equally, and he treats us in the same way as he treats his own mother Kaushalya. This is his natural character; there is no pretension or deceit in it. (5)

Moreover, he has special affection for me, and I have duly ascertained this fact by testing on an earlier occasion¹. (6)

[Note—¹This is a very significant observation. Why did Lord Ram love Kaikeyi more; why did he treat her in a special way? Well, it would be Kaikeyi later on in his life who would be ready to invite life-long ignominy and shame on herself by volunteering to cooperate with the gods' wish to send Lord Ram to the forest to eliminate the demons, thereby helping the Supreme Being to keep his promise too. Remember: If Lord Ram had not gone to the forest and vanquished the ferocious demons, and subsequently won the war of Lanka, but would have ascended the throne and accepted normal kingship as planned by his father, the Lord's fame and glory would have been limited to being another king in the long chain of kings of the illustrious royal household of Ayodhya, but definitely not as profound and radiant as was established with the Lord politely accepting to go to the forest, and there granting deliverance to countless demons by liberating their souls from the evil body of demons in which these souls were trapped, as well as providing bliss and beatitude to countless sages, hermits and other pious souls in far away lands, because these deeds of the Lord would recounted and sung for ages to come, and the Lord's life in the forest and deeds done by him there would lend profoundness and shine to his divinity, holiness, glory and fame.

To wit, Lord Ram showed preference for Kaikeyi in all manners. Whenever he got an opportunity, the Lord would first meet Kaikeyi before meeting anyone else of the household. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 244; (b) Uttar Kand, (ii) Doha no. 6-a.}

जौं बिधि जनमु देइ करि छोहू । होहुँ राम सिय पूत पुतोहू ॥ ७ ॥
प्रान तें अधिक रामु प्रिय मोरें । तिन्हु कैं तिलक छोभु कस तोरें ॥ ८ ॥

jaum̐ bidhi janamu dē'i kari chōhū. hōhum̐ rāma siya pūta putōhū. 7.
prāna tēm̐ adhika rāmu priya mōrēm̐. tinha kēm̐ tilaka chōbhū kasa tōrēm̐. 8.

To tell the truth, if the Creator is pleased with me and decides to give me another birth, then let him also be pleased enough with me so as to grant me the benefit of being a mother whose son is Lord Ram and daughter-in-law is Sita*.

[*This verse can also be read as follows: “Verily indeed, the Creator is truly pleased with me as he has given me a birth in which I became the mother of Lord Ram and have Sita as my daughter-in-law”.] (7)

Well, Ram is dearer to me than my own life. Say then, how is it that Lord Ram's anointment becomes an issue with you; why are you so agitated at his ascension to the throne? It beats me; I can't understand and fathom why it is so¹. (8)

[Note—¹This innocuous question of Kaikeyi, that was meant to express her amazement and disgust at Manthara's odd behaviour, however, had the opposite effect, as it opened the floodgates of disaster, because it provided the wicked Manthara an opening, a chance, to pour in her vitriol in order to poison her mistress' mind, as we shall soon read.]

दो०. भरत सपथ तोहि सत्य कहु परिहरि कपट दुराड ।
हरष समय बिसमउ करसि कारन मोहि सुनाउ ॥ १५ ॥

dōhā.

bharata sapatha tōhi satya kahu parihari kapaṭa durā'u.
haraṣa samaya bisama'u karasi kārana mōhi sunā'u. 15.

I solemnly urge you, in the name of my son Bharat, to come out clean, and abandon all forms of pretensions and deceit to frankly tell me why art thou grieve and lament so much at a time of celebrations and happiness.' (Doha no. 15)

[Note—As we have noted herein above in verse no. 8 that precedes this Doha, it was Kaikeyi who invited Manthara to drive the dagger in her by asking her to explain why she is so distressed and remorseful. This was the window of opportunity the cunning hunch-back was waiting for, and she made a good employ of it. She was asked to explain, and so she took her time to do so, with no hurry or a danger of offending her mistress any longer, for it was Kaikeyi who has asked her to explain her behaviour, and thus she is obliged to hear out Manthara's case to its final end and its natural conclusion.

Now it was the time for Manthara to smile, as she sharpened her dagger before driving it to its hilt in the unfortunate victim that Kaikeyi would now become.]

चौ०. एकहिं बार आस सब पूजी । अब कछु कहब जीभ करि दूजी ॥ १ ॥
फौरै जोगु कपारु अभागा । भलेउ कहत दुख रउरेहि लागा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

ēkahim̐ bāra āsa saba pūjī. aba kachu kahaba jībha kari dūjī. 1.
phōrai jōgu kapāru abhāgā. bhalē'u kahata dukha ra'urēhi lāgā. 2.

[When Manthara got the hint that Kaikeyi had quietly regretted at having scolded her long-time confidante and personal maid, and was now in a receptive mood to listen to what she had to say, the wicked maid became emboldened enough to gather courage to play her nasty trick with confidence, by adopting an aggressive posture to imply that it was her mistress Kaikeyi who would be the loser if she forces her trusted companion, Manthara, to keep her mouth shut, she went ahead boldly, taunting Kaikeyi as follows:-]

‘Verily, my first attempt to hope for your well-being and secure your future has already succeeded by being threatened to have my tongue pulled out¹; now I will need another tongue to make an attempt to answer your question²!

[To wit, when I spoke about thine welfare, thy havest threatened to pull out my tongue, and as if that was not enough, now thee asks me to answer thy question. Should I risk another tongue being pulled out for speaking out and telling the truth to thee?] (1)

Indeed my wretched head deserves to be smashed or broken into two for endeavouring to speak something that was good for you, but which unfortunately had an opposite effect upon you as it made you stressed out and agitated.

[To wit, instead of welcoming me and praising me for having alerted thee for the grave danger that stares thee in thy face, thou havest chosen to be bitter with me and scold me severely. Well, what care do I have; do as it pleases thee, but don't blame me later on in life for not being loyal and faithful to thine interests, and alerting thee in time for the looming danger.] (2)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 14.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 15 herein above.]

कहहिं झूठि फुरि बात बनाई । ते प्रिय तुम्हहि करुइ मैं माई ॥ ३ ॥
हमहुँ कहबि अब ठकुरसोहाती । नाहिं त मौन रहब दिनु राती ॥ ४ ॥

kahahim̐ jhūṭhi phuri bāta banā'ī. tē priya tumhahi karu'i maiṁ mā'ī. 3.
hamahum̐ kahabi aba ṭhakurasōhātī. nāhim̐ ta mauna rahaba dinu rātī. 4.

Oh mother (mā'ī)! It is such an irony and a paradox of fate that those who are sycophants and speak lies by saying things that you wish to hear just in order to keep you pleased and cook favour for themselves, are the ones whom you think are faithful to you and your true well-wishers, while I seem to be disagreeable to you though I speak something that is bitter to hear but is truly for your good. (3)

So therefore, I too will speak like a true sycophant by saying things that you wish to hear and that seem pleasant for your ears; otherwise I shall keep quiet (for why should I bother to annoy you by telling the truth and invite your wrath upon myself unnecessarily?). (4)

करि कुरूप बिधि परबस कीन्हा । बवा सो लुनिअ लहिअ जो दीन्हा ॥ ५ ॥
कोउ नृप होउ हमहि का हानी । चेरि छाड़ि अब होब कि रानी ॥ ६ ॥

kari kurūpa bidhi parabasa kīnhā. bavā sō luni'a lahi'a jō dīnhā. 5.
kō'u nrpa hō'u hamahi kā hānī. cēri chāḍi aba hōba ki rānī. 6.

The Creator (bidhi) has compelled me to become dependent on the mercy of others (and having to tolerate their taunts and ridicule because of my bodily deformity, for otherwise I would have found a better employment where I would be shown much more respect than the rough and shoddy way I am being treated in the present household)¹. One reaps what one sows; what one does gives one a relevant result². (5)

How does it matter to me whosoever becomes a king. I am always to remain a servant and slave throughout my life, and not going to be elevated to the ranks or a station of a queen!

[To wit, let anyone be a king, it matters not a wee whit to me. I was a maid heretofore, and I shalt, forsooth, be aught naught but a maid hereafter too. I ain't going to become a queen if this or that person ascends the throne. I am destined to serve as a maid, and as long as I do it, everything wilst be fine for me.] (6)

[Note—¹Quoth Manthara: “It is my great misfortune that I took birth with a deformed body, being bent at several points and having a lump on my body since birth, giving the impression that I am cursed and crooked. Woe to me, for it is the result of certain of my own misdoings during my previous life*. Since I could not lead an ordinary life, and was destined to live in subjugation, somehow struggling to get two square meals daily, I initially thought myself fortunate to have found my employ in the royal household of your father, the king of the kingdom of Kaikaya. When you were married to king of Ayodhya I was sent with you to keep you company and take care of your welfare, which I had been doing most loyally, faithfully and diligently. But here I am become a butt of ridicule and joke; anyone whosoever finds it a pastime to poke fun at me. But I kept on doing my duty towards you, and never complained. But today I am gravely pained that you too have ridiculed me, hinting that I am accustomed to go around creating mischief which might have angered Laxman who took me to task, and thy have also used harsh words against me and my bodily deformities. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 13; (ii) Doha no. 14 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it.}

I am crestfallen and extremely sad today, because of all the persons, I had least expected such ill-treatment at thy hands. Had I possessed a handsome body like other ladies, I am sure to have found some respectable situation in another household where my wits and skills and abilities would have been given due respect and recognition.”

*The reason of Manthara becoming a deformed woman and becoming a maid in the parental home of Kaikeyi has been narrated earlier in a note appended to Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 12.

²Here Manthara regrets the deeds of her past lives that have forced her to be born with a twisted body, and still more as a maid servant. She shows her disgust at Kaikeyi by

saying that it is so unfortunate that while she is worried about her mistress' welfare, the latter on the other hand ridicules her for being loyal to her interests. Manthara regrets that it is such an irony and paradox of her fate.]

जारै जोगु सुभाउ हमारा । अनभल देखि न जाइ तुम्हारा ॥ ७ ॥
तातें कछुक बात अनुसारी । छमिअ देबि बड़ि चूक हमारी ॥ ८ ॥

jārai jōgu subhā'u hamārā. anabhala dēkhi na jā'i tumhārā. 7.
tātēm kachuka bāta anusārī. chami'a dēbi baḍi cūka hamārī. 8.

But I am constrained to observe that my nature is worthy to be condemned to be roasted or burnt over fire because of its inherent habit of not being able to see anything that is not conducive to your good and welfare¹. (7)

That is the only reason, oh my honourable mistress (dēbi), I could not hold myself back and spoke something out of turn. I am very sorry for it; please forgive me for my impudence². (8)

[Note—¹As has been remarked earlier in this episode, Manthara was Kaikeyi's trusted aide and spy in the royal household. She was like her mistress' ears and eyes in the labyrinth of the palace, keeping her ears and eyes open to learn what intrigue and politics were being played by whom and against whom anywhere, and then rushing to tell her mistress about it to alert her in time. This was also the reason why after an initial outburst of anger and reproach for Manthara, Kaikeyi immediately stepped back and adopted a reconciliatory approach lest she would lose her 'ear and eye' in the form of Manthara, becoming blinded and deaf to all developments around her.

Manthara was well aware of the crucial role she played, and it is this weakness in Kaikeyi that is put to good use by the cunning hunch-back in order to bring her reluctant mistress on board, and to become a partner in giving effect to her evil scheme.

²Now the tables were turned. Kaikeyi paused and thought over the matter for a short while. Oh god of mine, she thought to herself, there must be something very grave and serious in this issue, and if Manthara is not allowed to speak frankly, mayhap I will have to regret terribly later on. So, it is wiser for me to let this faithful maid of mine say what she has to say; let her finish.]

दो०. गूढ़ कपट प्रिय बचन सुनि तीय अधरबुधि रानि ।
सुरमाया बस बैरिनिहि सुहृद जानि पतिआनि ॥ १६ ॥

dōhā.

gūṛha kapaṭa priya bacana suni tīya adharabudhi rāni.
suramāyā basa bairinihi suhrda jāni pati'āni. 16.

Hearing such confident words of her maid, words that though were crooked and full of deceit, howbeit seemed to have been spoken selflessly and having some grave meaning that directly concerned her own welfare, Kaikeyi was swayed.

Being a woman whose resolve is usually subjected to easy tampering, and having the weakness of character that is inherent to her gender, which was further aggravated by the interference of Maya (delusions prodded by gods, that assume the form of a fiat of Fate, the dictates of Destiny, and provisions of Providence, that often cloud one's wisdom and rational thinking)—the unsuspecting queen, Kaikeyi, erroneously took Manthara to be her best well-wisher, and her own husband, king Dasrath, as an outsider who would be least concerned about the good of the family. (Doha no. 16)

[Note—Kaikeyi was so much swayed by Manthara's urgency of appeal and the earnest way this crooked maid played her cards that she concluded that indeed there was something serious cooking against her in the family.

She thought: "Why indeed did my husband, king Dasrath, kept things secret from me? Surely the plan to anoint Lord Ram cannot have been put into effect overnight; why was I not informed? And, why was my son Bharat sent abroad to his maternal uncle's place long ago; and why was he not called to participate in the celebrations to appoint his elder brother Ram as the Prince-Regent? Why, did the king suspect our fidelity and integrity? Surely there is something amiss here. And here I am so stupid that when my faithful maid wants to alert me of the impending danger, I become angry at her! Woe to me."]

चौ०. सादर पुनि पुनि पूँछति ओही । सबरी गान मृगी जनु मोही ॥ १ ॥

तसि मति फिरी अहड़ जसि भाबी । रहसी चेरि घात जनु फाबी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sādara puni puni pūm̐chati ōhī. sabarī gāna mṛgī janu mōhī. 1.

tasi mati phirī aha'i jasi bhābī. rahasī cēri ghāta janu phābī. 2.

[Manthara kept quiet for a while to allow Kaikeyi to become more worried at her silence and reluctance to speak, as the latter would believe that her maid has become affright at her anger against her and the threat of pulling out her tongue for sowing the seeds of disruption in the family. The longer Manthara kept quiet, the more uneasy Kaikeyi became, so much so that whilst a while ago the queen had told her to shut up, she would now beg and plead with her maid to speak up.]

Kaikeyi repeatedly asked Manthara very politely to tell her what was in her mind, but the wily maid kept quiet initially (to indicate that she had no intention of getting punished for what she had to say)¹, as if an unfortunate deer is drawn to her doom by the singing of the tribal woman (known as Sabari) who uses it as a bait to lure and catch the poor and unsuspecting creature². (1)

It is said that the hypnotizing effect of Fate is so strong that the wisdom of the wisest gets tweaked. Hence, Kaikeyi yielded to the bait thrown by her maidservant (by showing her eagerness to hear what the maid had to say).

Verily, as luck would have it, the maidservant had her way; she cheered up that finally she would have what she wanted³. (2)

[Note—¹Kaikeyi has already threatened Manthara with dire punishment for saying anything that would disrupt harmony in the family, and Manthara has already retorted by saying that she has no intention of having her tongue pulled out for speaking, and would rather maintain silence—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 14 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it; and (ii) Doha no. 15 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that follow it.

²The Sabari is a class of tribal females belonging to the hunting tribes. They have the knack of mimicking the voice of animals in the wilds, especially those that are hunted for meat. So the Sabari woman would mimic the voice of a male deer in heat of passion, looking out for a partner, which lures a female who then goes in the direction from where the sound comes, only to fall in the trap already laid by the wicked woman. Thus trapped, the unfortunate and poor creature is killed for meat.

Likewise, here Kaikeyi is being lured into a trap by the deceitful words of Manthara which seem to be apparently well-intentioned and meant for her welfare, little knowing that she is being led to her doom, that she is being made a tool that would bring immeasurable suffering and grief not only to her family but to the kingdom in general, let alone the eternal ignominy and shame she was about to heap on her own self.

³When Manthara observed that Kaikeyi has become very eager to hear her, she concluded that the main gate of the fort has been broken, and that the decks have now been cleared to conquer the fort itself, with a minimum or no resistance.]

तुम्ह पूँछहु मैं कहत डेराऊँ । धरेहु मोर घरफोरी नाऊँ ॥ ३ ॥
सजि प्रतीति बहुबिधि गढ़ि छोली । अवध साढ़साती तब बोली ॥ ४ ॥

tumha pūm̐chahu maim̐ kahata ḍērā'ūṁ̐. dharēhu mōra gharaphōrī nā'ūṁ̐. 3.
saji pratīti bahubidhi gaḍhi chōlī. avadha sārhasātī taba bōlī. 4.

Manthara said to Kaikeyi: 'You insist in asking me to tell you what I want to say, but I am sore affright of being upbraided for being someone who breaks the family, as you have already named me as someone who sows seeds of disharmony and causes a rift in your family (gharaphōrī nā'ūṁ̐)¹.' (1)

Meanwhile, Manthara put to employ all her cunning wits and skills at deceit and pretensions so that the gullible Kaikeyi would develop full trust in her and think her to be the best well-wisher of hers.

Then after succeeding to build a firm foundation for her evil scheme, Manthara raised the pitch to speak things that would portend doom for Ayodhya just like the evil eye of the planet Saturn that causes misery for a protracted period of seven-and-a-half years for anyone upon whom this eye is cast (avadha sārhasātī)². (2)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 14.

²According to Indian Astrology, if the planet Saturn occupies a wrong place in the horoscope of a person, or for some other reason gets offended, then it would exert its evil influence upon that person and cause interminable hardships to him or her for a continuous period of seven-and-a-half years.

Likewise, here Manthara is likened to this detested planet, as she would be the cause of bringing immense grief and sufferings to one and all in the otherwise happy and prosperous kingdom of Ayodhya.]

प्रिय सिय रामु कहा तुम्ह रानी । रामहि तुम्ह प्रिय सो फुरि बानी ॥ ५ ॥
रहा प्रथम अब ते दिन बीते । समउ फिरें रिपु होहिं पिरीते ॥ ६ ॥

priya siya rāmu kahā tumha rānī. rāmahi tumha priya sō phuri bānī. 5.
rahā prathama aba tē dina bītē. sama'u phirēm ripu hōhim pirītē. 6.

Manthara continued: ‘Oh queen! What you have said that you love Lord Ram and his wife Sita, and that they reciprocate your emotions by loving you too¹, is indeed true. (5)

But beware! That was indeed true sometimes ago, but now the situation has changed. Remember the maxim that when the tide of time turns, even the best of friends do become enemies². (6)

[Note—¹Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5--8 that precede Doha no. 15.

²To wit, I don’t deny or dispute that Lord Ram and Sita loved you as much as you loved them. But the lure of the throne and its associated privileges are so strong that they can topple the strongest of resolves and bring to a naught all old affections and promises of loyalty, sincerity of faith and fidelity. One ought naught to accept things blindly, for oftentimes what seems to be obvious is merely a mirage seen in a hot desert. Remember: Everyone is driven by one’s self-interest first and foremost, and all other matters come after that. Situation on the ground has now dramatically changed. Till this point of time it was Dasrath who himself sat on the throne, and as a loving father to his sons, he treated them all alike. But now Dasrath has become old and infirm, and so one of his four sons would sit on the throne. Remember: The person who sits on the throne is the ‘king’, and others serve him. Dasrath had no one to compete with him, but here there are four claimants to the throne, meaning stiff competition.

There are chances that even out of a false suspicion or wrong advice of some vested interest within the inner circle of the newly anointed king, i.e. Lord Ram, that some kind of conspiracy is being hatched against him, the newly appointed king, using it as an excuse, would either put other brothers behind bars in the prison, or banish them from the kingdom outright.

Laxman is very cunning and he has already brought himself close to Lord Ram by pampering him, whereas Bharat is so honest and clean in his heart that he

does not think of this possibility ever happening, so he has remained normal, without making any overt attempt to please his elder brother and garner his support, for Bharat believes that Lord Ram can never harm his interests. But my dear mistress, the world is a very crooked place to survive in; there is no place for complacency in it. My worst fear is that Bharat would be imprisoned and you will have to serve like an ordinary maid as I am. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 19 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it.}]

भानु कमल कुल पोषनिहारा । बिनु जल जारि करइ सोइ छारा ॥ ७ ॥
जरि तुझारि चह सवति उखारी । रूँधहु करि उपाउ बर बारी ॥ ८ ॥

bhānu kamala kula pōṣanihārā. binu jala jāri kara'i sō'i chārā. 7.
jari tumhāri caha savati ukhārī. rūṁdhahu kari upā'u bara bārī. 8.

Take an example. See, the sun makes the lotus flower bloom and open its petals as long as the flower is in water, but the same sun would burn the flower to ashes if there is no water surrounding the lotus¹. (7)

Your enemy is trying to uproot you and throw you away². So it would be wise for you to devise a device and choose a strategy in such a way that you would pay your enemy in the same coin by using your wit and skill to crush it underfoot, and have an upper hand in the scheme of things to come. (8)

[Note—¹The sun and the lotus are the same; the only change in the situation is the presence of water in the first case when the lotus blooms, and the absence of water in the second case when the lotus burns in the intense heat of the sun. This is because in the second case there is no water to protect the flower from the heat of the sun.

Similarly, earlier the brothers were on equal footing, but now one of them would be a 'king'. That means the protection of their father Dasrath would be gone for other brothers, and they would be at the mercy of the new king, who might have been one of them earlier but now is separated from the other brothers by the wall of kingdom. So when some self-interest of the new king would intervene, everything else would be forgotten.

The presence or absence of water is used to indicate the changing of situation for the lotus, just like one of the four brothers being a king would change the equation between them.

²The wicked Manthara has not named anyone in particular as being Kaikeyi's enemy. But she has already given ample hints at who it is: It is Kaushalya, the mother of Lord Ram—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 14.

Manthara would come out in the open with naming Kaushalya as the main culprit just a little while later, saying the reason of Kaushalya becoming Kaikeyi's enemy was that the king, Dasrath, favours the latter over the former. So therefore, Kaushalya has laid a trap whereby she would relegate her bete noire Kaikeyi to the background. This is clearly stated in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 18 herein below.]

दो०. तुम्हहि न सोचु सोहाग बल निज बस जानहु राउ ।
मन मलीन मुह मीठ नृपु राउर सरल सुभाउ ॥ १७ ॥

dōhā.

tumhahi na sōcu sōhāga bala nija basa jānahu rā'u.
mana malīna muha mīṭha nṛpu rā'ura sarala subhā'u. 17.

You are free from any anxiety in the belief that your husband loves you and you have influence on him. But you don't know how cunning the king is by his inherent nature, because he speaks sweetly but has a dark heart and equally dark mind. (Doha no. 17)

[Note—The reader would see how bold has Manthara become; she does not have any compunctions or any fear worth the while in uttering such insinuations against the ruling monarch. And, to make matters worse, Kaikeyi too remains deaf and blind to these impertinences and an utter impudent behaviour of a lowly maidservant.]

चौ०. चतुर गँभीर राम महतारी । बीचु पाइ निज बात सँवारी ॥ १ ॥
पठए भरतु भूप ननिअउरें । राम मातु मत जानब रउरें ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

catura gam̐bhīra rāma mahatārī. bīcu pā'i nija bāta sam̐vārī. 1.
paṭha'ē bharatu bhūpa nani'a'urēm. rāma mātu mata jānaba ra'urēm. 2.

Ram's mother (Kaushalya) is very cunning and deceitful. She found a suitable opportunity to serve her selfish ends (by somehow convincing her husband Dasrath that it would be proper for him to anoint Lord Ram on the throne)¹. (1)

Obviously the king played into her hands, and in connivance with her, he has sent Bharat to his uncle's place (so that in the meantime Lord Ram would be made the Prince-Regent, and all royal powers and authority transferred into his hands, so that when your son comes back, he won't be able to do anything). (2)

[Note—¹Manthara instigated Kaikeyi by telling her a cooked-up story as follows—'Listen my dear mistress; listen carefully to what I have to say to you. Kaushalya must have told king Dasrath: "Look dear husband! You are getting old and infirm. You must decide who will succeed you. According to the tradition in our family, nay, it is a tradition in all royal families as well, and not only ours, that the eldest son ascends the throne. You have four sons, and there are ripe chances that if you do not take a quick and decisive action in this matter then there would be an unnecessary strife and rift in the family, bringing disrepute to all of us and compromising on the goodwill we have amongst our subjects, besides making the brothers enemies. But at the same time I fear that one of the brothers, i.e. Bharat, may try to interfere, because though he has great love for Lord Ram, yet his mother, Kaikeyi, is selfish and not of a good nature, so she would provoke her son, Bharat, to revolt against Lord Ram. Have you (Dasrath) realized the gravity of this situation? So therefore, it is prudent and wise to

first send Bharat away in a manner that no one suspects anything wrong, and then, in his absence, make your eldest son Lord Ram the Prince-Regent.

No one would accuse you of any wrong-doing, as you would have acted in accordance to the set procedure for succession that has come down through the ages. On the contrary, if there is some tussle for the throne amongst the brothers, it is surely going to put you in an uncomfortable position.”

At this, oh my dear mistress Kaikeyi, the old king was so moved with alarm, and Kaushalya’s arguments were so logical and convincing to him, that he politely sent Bharat to your maternal home on the pretext of a vacation, and in the meantime quietly made all arrangements to appoint Lord Ram on the throne.

Tell me, if he had no ill-intentions, and if everything was overboard, then why were you not informed about the king’s decision to anoint his eldest son to the throne; what fear did the king have that he kept things secret from you? Why didn’t he call Bharat urgently to join in the celebrations, instead of holding the anointment ceremony so quickly tomorrow itself before any news reaches him? Why is it only me from whom you came to learn of Lord Ram’s anointment tomorrow?

Are thou so dumb and your mind deadwood so as not to be able to analyse things for yourself and know what all this means?’]

सेवहिं सकल सवति मोहि नीकें । गरबित भरत मातु बल पी कें ॥ ३ ॥

सालु तुम्हार कौसिलहि माई । कपट चतुर नहिं होइ जनाई ॥ ४ ॥

sēvahiṁ sakala savati māṁōhi nīkēṁ. garabita bharata mātu bala pī kēṁ. 3.
sālu tumhāra kausilahi mā’ī. kapaṭa catura nahīṁ hō’i janā’ī. 4.

[Manthara continued—] ‘Do you know what she (Kaushalya) thinks? She thinks that all other sister-queens, who are my co-wives, serve me well, but Bharat’s mother, i.e. you, have becoming too proud of yourself because the king loves you more than others. [This has aroused jealousy in her against you and your son Bharat.] (3)

Oh my dear motherly mistress (mā’ī)! Your partner, i.e. your sister-queen Kaushalya, is a very cunning and sly lady who knows how to play her game skillfully and with craft, and that is why she acts so cleverly in her outwardly behaviour that you are not able to get a hint of what is there in her mind and heart. (4)

राजहि तुम्ह पर प्रेमु बिसेषी । सवति सुभाउ सकइ नहिं देखी ॥ ५ ॥

रचि प्रपंचु भूपहि अपनाई । राम तिलक हित लगन धराई ॥ ६ ॥

rājahi tumha para prēmu bisēṣī. savati subhā’u saka’i nahīṁ dēkhī. 5.
raci prapañcu bhūpahi apanā’ī. rāma tilaka hita lagana dharā’ī. 6.

The king has natural affection for you; he is fond of you. But this has irked Kaushalya, as it is natural and common place amongst many wives of a king to be jealous of each other, and especially with the one whom they find has a greater favour with the king, so much so that they always plan to ruin her. You have thus become an eyesore for her (and she can’t tolerate your happiness). (5)

So, she contrived a scheme to curry favour with the king, and then finding a ripe opportunity she prevailed upon him to fix Lord Ram's anointment to the throne. (6)

यह कुल उचित राम कहूँ टीका । सबहि सोहाइ मोहि सुठि नीका ॥ ७ ॥
आगिलि बात समुझि डरु मोही । देउ दैउ फिरि सो फलु ओही ॥ ८ ॥

yaha kula ucita rāma kahum̐ ṭikā. sabahi sōhā'i mōhi suṭhi nīkā. 7.
āgili bāta samujhi ḍaru mōhī. dē'u dai'u phiri sō phalu ōhī. 8.

Well, it is absolutely alright and in accordance with established norms that Lord Ram should be anointed as the next King. It is liked by everyone, and I personally am very pleased with it (and remember that I have nothing against it; not at all by any imagination). (7)

What worries me, and is the cause of my mental disturbance and fear, is what would happen next. That thought sends shivers in me; I shudder at the consequences of what would happen if Kaushalya's wish to get Lord Ram on the throne succeeds.

Oh Creator! I beseech you to ordain that the mischief backfires on her (Kaushalya); let her taste the bitterness of the very fruit of the tree she wishes to sow for others.¹ (8)

[Note—¹It is easy to see how cunning and crafty this wicked Manthara is. First she tells Kaikeyi that the king is fond of her and loves her more than other queens, thereby arousing envy in her to protect her privileged position from being usurped by others. This also helped Kaikeyi to be convinced that it is very much possible that Kaushalya was trying to foul with her. The second cunning card that Manthara played was to say that it was absolutely alright that Lord Ram gets the throne; everyone likes it and she particularly favours it herself. This was to give the impression that she has nothing personal against Lord Ram and fully approves his anointment. This posture was very essential for Manthara's own safety should her evil design fails, for Kaikeyi has already told her that (i) she loves Lord Ram, and (ii) it is perfectly alright that the eldest brother gets the throne after their father—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 15.

Showing favour for Lord Ram's anointment would also neutralize Kaikeyi's severely scolding Manthara for speaking against Lord Ram and his anointment, for it might have grave consequences for Manthara's safety if she failed in her nefarious design—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 14 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it.

Now, with that danger on her personal safety out of harms way, Manthara comes to the point. She now plays on the human weakness of jealousy and envy, and the hatred it arouses in a person for the opposite party, by saying that it would be Kaikeyi alone who will be the sufferer and the one to regret, and no one else, if she does not pay heed to what her trusted maid has to advice. Cunning as she was, Manthara closes her arguments by saying that she hopes that Kaushalya is made to suffer the way she wants Kaikeyi to do. This ploy made it look that she is very loyal to Kaikeyi and is always worried about her mistress' welfare, on and above everything else in this world.]

दो०. रचि पचि कोटिक कुटिलपन कीन्हिसि कपट प्रबोधु।
कहिसि कथा सत सवति कै जेहि बिधि बाढ़ बिरोधु ॥ १८ ॥

dōhā.

raci paci kōṭika kuṭilapana kīnhēsi kapaṭa prabōdhu.
kahisi kathā sata savati kai jēhi bidhi bāṛha birōdhu. 18.

Manthara cooked up so many false and outrageous stories of how jealousy and envy amongst co-wives have caused havoc on the unsuspecting and clean hearted among them in the past¹, and painted so grim a picture of a dangerous and grave future that stared Kaikeyi in the face, that it fomented serious misgivings in her mistress. Kaikeyi became gravely alarmed; her suspicion was stoked and passions aroused². (Doha no. 18)

[Note—¹Refer to Doha no. 19 herein below.

²It may be noted here, by the way, the subtle message and advice this episode gives—it points to the negative consequences of having more than one wife.

King Dasrath had three chief queens, and this was used by Manthara to sow the seed of rift, dissention, jealousy and envy in Kaikeyi's mind. She does not question the eldest son becoming the next king; she instead cooks up an imaginary story that Kaushalya was jealous of Kaikeyi because the latter was the king's favourite, and therefore the former was planning the ruin of the latter. That this was a total falsehood will be clear later on when king Dasrath himself tells Kaikeyi that Kaushalya had no role to play in his decision to appoint Lord Ram as the next king, but he did it because it was an established tradition. {Refer—Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. —to 31 along with Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it.}]

चौ०. भावी बस प्रतीति उर आई । पूँछ रानि पुनि सपथ देवाई ॥ १ ॥
का पूँछहु तुम्ह अबहुँ न जाना । निज हित अनहित पसु पहिचाना ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

bhāvī basa pratīti ura āī. pūm̐cha rāni puni sapatha dēvāī. 1.
kā pūm̐chahu tumha abahum̐ na jānā. nija hita anahita pasu pahicānā. 2.

Under the influence of an unfortunate Fate, the queen (Kaikeyi) believed what was said (by Manthara). Convinced of her maid's fidelity, the queen once again solemnly asked her to elaborate under oath¹. (1)

[Observing that she has succeeded in bringing Kaikeyi to her side, Manthara struck the right stroke to drive home the dagger of envy and jealousy into Kaikeyi, who, by this time, had become suspicious of her own husband and her queen-sister Kaushalya.]

Manthara said emphatically, without any trace of doubt in her assertions: ‘What and why are you asking me; haven’t you understood what I mean? Verily, even an animal can judge what is good or bad for it². (2)

[Note—¹This is the second time that Kaikeyi asks Manthara to explain elaborately what she means. The first time too Manthara had played her cunning card and became quiet, leaving Kaikeyi wondering what so grave the matter was, compelling her to plead with her maid to speak on—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 16—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 17.

²Now it was Manthara’s turn to scold Kaikeyi because she was confirmed that her mistress has become very alarmed and agitated when it became known to her that some danger lurks behind the corner, that her future was insecure, and that her maid is the only one who is worried about her welfare, and she was the only one to fall back on to give her the right advice.

So, Manthara said tauntingly: “How fool thou art that still thou can’t see the obvious. Hast thy mind gone blank that thou wot naught what is good or bad for thee? Even an animal, that is supposed to lack wisdom and is deemed to be stupid by nature, would be aware of its welfare, and art thou worse than it?”

Manthara frowned upon her mistress Kaikeyi in exasperation; is her ladyship so dumb and deaf and a deadwood in her mind that still she could not see the danger for her own security and future as well as that of her son Bharat’s, that looms over the horizon, even after telling her so in plain language? The evil hunch-backed must have bit her lips in frustration when Kaikeyi showed reluctance to bite her bait as easily as this wicked maid had thought she would, as if Kaikeyi was feigning ignorance that she did not fully understand what her companion meant to say.

So therefore, Manthara quickly decided that enough was enough, and there is no point in beating around the bush any longer. Hence, Manthara would throw all cautions to the wind, becoming bold, forthright and blunt in answering Kaikeyi about what she was certain would be mistress’ future if the latter dithers and does not follow her trusted companion’s advice, as we shall see in the verses that follow herein below.]

भयउ पाखु दिन सजत समाजू । तुम्ह पाई सुधि मोहि सन आजू ॥ ३ ॥

खाइअ पहिरिअ राज तुम्हारे । सत्य कहें नहिं दोषु हमारे ॥ ४ ॥

bhaya'u pākhū dina sajata samājū. tumha pā'ī sudhi mōhi sana ājū. 3.
khā'i'a pahiri'a rāja tumhārēm. satya kahēm nahim dōṣu hamārēm. 4.

A fortnight (pākhū dina) has gone by since the preparations are under way (for the anointment ceremony of Lord Ram), and you have become aware of it only today when I have told you so¹. (3)

I live in your ladyship’s protection, I serve you, I live and eat in your kingdom, I am employed by you; hence, I will not be transgressing any limits but only doing my duty in telling you the truth (no matter how bitter it may sound)². (4)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 17.]

It is such a bundle of lies that Manthara speaks. The preparations for Lord Ram's anointment had started that very day as is evident by the sequence of events narrated in the following verses of Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand: (i) Doha no. 5 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it; (ii) Doha no. 6 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that follow it; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 3-6 that precede Doha no. 11; (iv) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 13; and (v) Chaupai line no. 4 that precede Doha no. 15.

²Once again, Manthara builds an alibi to protect herself: She says that she is merely doing her duty towards her mistress as a faithful servant is supposed to do, by informing her of the developments and what those mean for her. If she does not do so, she will be betraying her employer who feeds her, clothes her, and gives her shelter. Will that be right? So, even at the risk of inviting her mistress' wrath for telling certain bitter things, she is morally bound to tell her what she ought to know.]

जौं असत्य कछु कहब बनाई । तौ बिधि देइहि हमहि सजाई ॥ ५ ॥

रामहि तिलक कालि जौं भयऊ । तुम्ह कहूँ बिपति बीजु बिधि बयऊ ॥ ६ ॥

jaum̐ asatya kachu kahaba banā'ī. tau bidhi dē'ihī hamahi sajā'ī. 5.

rāmahi tilaka kāli jaum̐ bhaya'ū. tumha kahum̐ bipati bīju bidhi baya'ū. 6.

Verily, if I speak a lie (and am leading you to your destruction), then let the Creator punish me for my falsehood, impudence and impertinence¹. (5)

If Lord Ram is anointed on the throne tomorrow, if the plan succeeds, then be certain that the Creator would have sown a seed for your ill-fortunes and miseries.

[I have no qualms or regrets in saying this so bluntly and frankly to you as I am under oath, and I fear God's wrath if I would speak anything but the truth.] (6)

[Note—¹Refer verse no. 1 herein above where Kaikeyi has put Manthara under oath. The way Manthara speaks here is how a person is expected to speak under oath: that if that person dares to say a word of lie, then let God punish him.]

रेख खँचाइ कहउँ बलु भाषी । भामिनि भइहु दूध कइ माखी ॥ ७ ॥

जौं सुत सहित करहु सेवकाई । तौ घर रहहु न आन उपाई ॥ ८ ॥

rēkha khamcā'i kaha'um̐ balu bhāṣī. bhāmini bha'ihu dūdha ka'i mākhī. 7.

jaum̐ suta sahita karahu sēvakā'ī. tau ghara rahahu na āna upā'ī. 8.

I draw a firm line and affirm emphatically, oh my mistress, with all the strength of conviction I can muster, that your honourable ladyship (bhāmini) would be as unwanted and treated with as much disdain and disgust as one would treat a fly in one's cup of milk¹. (7)

Then, if you and your son Bharat agree to serve (your jealous sister-queen Kaushalya and her son Lord Ram), it would then only be possible for you to live here in your palace, otherwise you will be out, and there would be no other option or alternative left for you². (8)

[Note—¹Manthara provoked Kaikeyi and showed the ugly and disdainful way she would be treated by everyone scheming against her as soon as the center of power shifts out of her husband's hands into that of the newly appointed king, Lord Ram. The very sight of a fly in one's cup of milk is unbearable to the person who holds the cup. What will this person do? He will immediately pick up the poor creature with the tip of his finger, or say a spoon or some like picking tool, and flick it off as quickly as he can; but he will not throw the cup away.

Likewise, all those who are jealous of her and scheming against her, said Manthara, would waste no time in throwing her out of the palace, and stop all the privileges she has been enjoying as a queen.

²Naturally and obviously, this alarming scenario and forebodings of a doomed future of a life in slavery, both for own self as well as for her son Bharat, sent chill down the spine of Kaikeyi. She trembled and shivered as if a fearful fever or a fit of spasm has got hold of her. She stood motionless and speechless, full of dread, with her blood rushing violently in her carotids and agitating her beyond description.]

दो०. कद्रूँ बिनतहि दीन्ह दुखु तुम्हहि कौसिलाँ देब ।
भरतु बंदिगृह सेइहहिं लखनु राम के नेब ॥ १९ ॥

dōhā.

kadrūṁṁ binatahi dīnha dukhu tumhahi kausilāmṁ dēba.
bharatu bandigṛha sē'ihahim lakhanu rāma kē nēba. 19.

[Not contented with simply making conjectures to prophesise doom of Kaikeyi, Manthara decided to support her arguments and contentions by citing instances from ancient history when other ladies too had to suffer at the hands of those who were jealous of the former.]

Manthara continued undeterred: 'Even as Kadru had made Vintaa suffer¹, so would Kaushalya make you suffer too, and force you to lead a miserable life.

Bharat (your son) would suffer in the prison. Laxman would escape the knot because he has made himself closer to Lord Ram².' (Doha no.19)

[Note—¹This story in brief is as follows: Kadru and Vintaa were amongst the several wives of sage Kashyap. Kadru was the mother of serpents, while Vintaa of Garud (the king of the bird kingdom) and Arun (dawn; symbolizing the rising sun; the infant Sun God).

Once, the two women got into an argument regarding the colour of the tail of the horses of the chariot that pulled the Sun across the sky. Kadru contented that they were black, while Vintaa insisted that they were white. Finally they decided that one whose contention comes out to be wrong or false would have to serve the other, the winner of the argument, as the latter's maidservant.

Kadru's sons, the serpents, went surreptitiously and coiled themselves around the tail of the horses so that they appeared black to the viewer. With this cunning trick, Kadru succeeded to make Vintaa her slave, and thereafter would give the latter a lot of trouble. One day, Garud asked his mother, Vintaa, the reason for her remorseful mood and sadness, at which his mother told him the entire episode.

To relieve his mother of this curse, Garud did severe Tapa (penance) and pleased Lord Vishnu, seeking a boon from the Lord that he should be able to gobble up all types of snakes rapidly, without the snakes being able to offer any resistance to him or harming him with their poison. Thence, armed with this boon, Garud vented his ire on the serpent class, devouring them relentlessly wherever he saw them. In this way, Garud punished the serpents for adopting deceit and conceit that had led his mother Vintaa to become a maidservant before Kadru, the mother of serpents, and suffer for so long. {This story is narrated in the epic Mahabharat, in its Aadi Parva, Chapter no. 20.}

A different version of the same story is narrated elsewhere in the Mahabharat. It says that when Garud discovered that the serpents were the cause of his mother's grief and misery, he approached them and asked them what he could do for them so that they will free his mother Vintaa from her cursed existence. The serpents asked Garud to bring the pot of Amrit (the sweet ambrosia of eternal life) for them if he wants them to free his mother from her bondage.

Garud took permission from his parents (Vintaa and sage Kashyap) and went to the celestial lake to fetch the pot of Amrit that was guarded by a Tortoise and an Elephant. Garud slayed and devoured them; when the gods intervened and tried to stop him from taking the pot of Amrit away, Garud defeated them in battle. He came and put the pot of Amrit before the serpents. The serpents were then obliged to free his mother from her curse.

Meanwhile, Indra, the king of gods, was alarmed at the prospect of the serpents drinking Amrit and becoming eternal, a privilege heretofore enjoyed only by the gods. So, Indra made friends with Garud and blessed him with a boon that he would be able to devour serpents without any resistance from his enemies. So therefore, no sooner than Garud got his mother Vintaa released from her curse by placing the Amrit before the serpents, but Indra stole it away, and in the ensuing confusion Garud did his best to pounce upon his enemies, the serpents who had crowed at the place to take a sip of Amrit, and gobbled them en-masse. {This story is narrated in the epic Mahabharat, in its Aadi Parva, Chapter no. 27.}

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 10.

While gathering information from the citizens about the cause of celebrations, Manthara had also discreetly ascertained as to whom had visited Lord Ram in the meantime, when it became known to her that Laxman had gone to meet the Lord and congratulate him.]

चौ०. कैकयसुता सुनत कटु बानी । कहि न सकइ कछु सहमि सुखानी ॥ १ ॥

तन पसेउ कदली जिमि काँपी । कुबरीं दसन जीभ तब चाँपी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kaikayasutā sunata kaṭu bānī. kahi na saka'i kachu sahāmi sukhānī. 1.
tana pasē'u kadālī jimi kāmṣī. kubarīm dasana jībha taba cāmṣī. 2.

The daughter of king Kaikaya (i.e. Kaikeyi) was dumb-struck and utterly shocked at hearing these bitter words (of Manthara) predicting a grave and miserable future for her; so much affrighted was she that for a while she could not speak a word. (1)

Kaikeyi began sweating, and she trembled like the stem of a weak banana plant. Observing her nervousness, and concluding that at last she has managed to instill a mortal fear in Kaikeyi's mind concerning her personal safety and security (if she does not act swiftly and stop Lord Ram from becoming a king), the wretched hunch-back (Manthara) bit her tongue sharply with the upper row of her teeth¹. (2)

[Note—¹Manthara acted with the scornful viciousness, utter disdain, complete lack of compassion, and ruthlessness with which one treats one's mortal enemy once the latter falls in a trap laid by the former. Manthara's biting her tongue with her teeth shows how cruel and blood-thirsty she had by now become. Her behaviour is like that of a merciless villain who is ready to slay his victim with the final thrust of the dagger or the swipe of the sword.

Kaikeyi's sweating and shivering convinced Manthara that fear of the worst has taken a firm hold on her psyche; that now her mistress was open to all kinds of suggestions, no matter how outlandish or ignominious and aggressive they may be, aught that may indicate to her that it was the only option left for her if she wants to protect her own interests. So, concluded the wicked hunch-back, it was the right time to strike, and to strike hard while the iron is still hot. Kaikeyi ought naught to be given any more time to reflect, for then she might change her mind.

So, Manthara bit her tongue so hard that perhaps blood oozed out of it; and it was in the fitness of things, as the taste of blood made her mentally prepared for the kill, just like a tigress who readies herself for the final dig of her sharp fangs into her helpless prey whom she has already subdued and pressed on the ground under her belly.

There is another way we can interpret Manthara's biting her tongue with her teeth. It could be that when she saw Kaikeyi shaking and sweating, she felt alarmed and nervous herself that her mistress was swooning, and was about to collapse and pass away. Oh my goodness, thought Manthara, it would ruin the whole plan, because then it would be a medical emergency and she would have to call in other members of the palace immediately to help Kaikeyi, and all attention would be focused on reviving her. It was sure then that she won't get a chance anytime soon to converse with Kaikeyi in private, and by the time she does get it, everything will be lost, as by then it is sure that Lord Ram would already be anointed as the Prince-Regent and the next King of Ayodhya, tossing all her endeavours to stop this from happening out of the window.]

कहि कहि कोटिक कपट कहानी । धीरजु धरहु प्रबोधिसि रानी ॥ ३ ॥
फिरा करमु प्रिय लागि कुचाली । बकिहि सराहइ मानि मराली ॥ ४ ॥

kahi kahi kōṭika kapaṭa kahānī. dhīraju dharahu prabōdhisi rānī. 3.
phirā karamu priya lāgi kucālī. bakihi sarāha'i māni marālī. 4.

Manthara did her best to help the queen (i.e. Kaikeyi) recover from her emotional shock and nervous distemper by telling her many fictitious stories, by way of reassuring examples, to convince her that everything would be fine if she has patience and maintains her wits around her¹. (3)

At last Manthara's efforts paid returns to her, because by now Kaikeyi's reluctance had faded away as she mellowed down and veered around to fall in line with her sly maid's crooked designs, so much so that the unsuspecting Kaikeyi began to think that the evil heron was indeed a swan². (4)

[Note—¹The wily Manthara was clever enough to play the role of a true friend and a wise companion who would comfort someone in distress by giving the latter examples of others who showed courage, patience, resilience, and presence of mind in times of adversities to win the situation and turn it in their favour. Getting upset and losing mental balance is no solution when one faces an emergency; one ought to be rather calm and poised, and think with a focused mind and pay attention to the possible ways by which one could overcome the obstacle that obstructs one's path to success. That is the wise way forward; swooning and sweating is no solution.

²Kaikeyi was on tenterhooks and her mind so alarmed that she could not think rationally and coherently any longer. Fear of the impending danger had possessed her; she was in the grip of distress and uncertainty, and felt isolated and marooned, with no one to aid and support her in the world except Manthara, whom, by this time, she began to treat as her best friend and well-wisher. When a person is in extreme mental distress and agitated, his rational mind stops functioning properly; he flounders and staggers and does not know what to and what not to do. In this uncertainty, if someone comes to lend a helping hand, the suffering man feels very thankful and obliged to him. If this helper is sincere and honest, and has no ulterior motives, then he is like a god-sent angel for the sufferer; but the opposite prevails if someone pretends to extend help but actually has an evil eye on the poor person who is suffering.

Here, Kaikeyi was so emotionally disturbed that her mind had stopped working. She felt that she has been cornered and imprisoned already. In this condition, she saw Manthara as her only hope, someone who can help her out of the quagmire she has landed into.

The heron stands on one foot in a lake or large pond as if it is meditating, but as soon as a fish comes within reach, the cunning bird would swiftly catch it and swallow it. On the other hand, the swan is a symbol of good virtues, purity and integrity; this bird is reputed as not being deceitful, and it never preys on any creature in the water for meat. Both these birds are white in colour, but their nature and character are different—while a heron is crooked, evil, deceitful, and a vile, flesh eating bird, swan, on the other hand, is considered a noble bird which is an epitome of purity and integrity.

The unfortunate fish thinks that the heron is standing motionless in the water meditating, and so it does not fear going near the bird, for it never thinks that the wicked heron is closely watching the movement of the fish in its vicinity, and is

waiting for a chance to pounce upon its prey as soon as it can. So the unsuspecting poor fish meets its end sooner than it expected.

Likewise, the friendly posture adopted by Manthara, who pretended to be Kaikeyi's well-wisher and an all-weather companion, misled the queen to trust her and fall into the trap laid out by her.]

सुनु मंथरा बात फुरि तोरी । दहिनि आँखि नित फरकइ मोरी ॥ ५ ॥

दिन प्रति देखउँ राति कुसपने । कहउँ न तोहि मोह बस अपने ॥ ६ ॥

काह करौं सखि सूध सुभाऊ । दाहिन बाम न जानउँ काऊ ॥ ७ ॥

sunu mantharā bāta phuri tōrī. dahini āmkhi nita pharaka'i mōrī. 5.

dina prati dēkha'um' rāti kusapanē. kaha'um' na tōhi mōha basa apanē. 6.

kāha karaum sakhi sūdha subhā'ū. dāhina bāma na jāna'um' kā'ū. 7.

[Kaikeyi was so much fooled by Manthara's pretensions and the web of deceit woven by her that she praised the maidservant's wisdom and her ability to foresee the danger lurking behind the curtain.]

Kaikeyi said, 'Oh Manthra, listen. What you say is indeed true, for I have ample signs that there is something seriously wrong, because my right eye keeps on fluttering intermittently everyday. (5)

Besides this, every night I see bad dreams, but it is out of my own carelessness (or you can call it my stupidity arising out of my overconfidence or simple nature, or because I was so deluded that I lived in a false make-belief world of security and happiness) that I had not discussed the matter with you (for I did not realize that these signs could mean so grave things). (6)

But my dear friend (sakhi), what can I do, for I have a very simple and straightforward nature (that never sees the dark side of anything or suspect any foul play being enacted behind my back), so I never thought that fluttering of the left side of my body would mean that so serious a danger is about to happen to me.'¹ (7)

[Note—¹Kaikeyi had some bad omens happening to her, but she neglected them as routine matters, and did not pay any special attention to them. However, when Manthara pointed out to her the gravity of the situation that was unfolding, and the danger she and her son have landed into, Kaikeyi suddenly realized the importance of having the aforesaid bad signs—such as fluttering of her left eye during the day, and bad dreams in the night.

All of a sudden, Manthara became her best friend and faithful companion, a comrade-in-arm and an aide in distress. Praising Manthara for her loyalty and wisdom, Kaikeyi told her: "My dear friend. I admit that I have erred in not disclosing these evil signs to thee, and that I should have consulted thee regarding them and what they portend for me. But now that thou hast told me everything, I suddenly realize the meaning of these bad omens. Oh my goodness! I could never fathom the gravity of this situation. I praise thine loyalty and wisdom and am exceedingly thankful to

thee for having alerted me in good time so that remedial steps can be taken before it is too late to mend things.”

This episode teaches us an interesting lesson: The signs that Kaikeyi had witnessed did not specifically tell her what sort of evil would befall her, except that something serious was about to happen that is directly going to impact her, and would have a grave consequence for her happiness and wellbeing. This hint of an impending danger could mean anything from a wide variety of things under the sun, but the fiat of Fate so destined that Kaikeyi had an evil company of a wicked maid, and was so easily influenced by the latter that she began to interpret these bad omens to mean exactly what Manthara wished her to believe. To wit, the lesson we get to learn here is, first, the importance of having good advisors who are sincere, honest, wise, selfless and competent, and second, not to rely too much on them either, but to think over the matter personally, to use one’s own wisdom and intelligence with prudence, weighing all the pros and cons with a calm mind, before arriving at a conclusion. Sometimes it happens that what seems to be the truth turns out to be completely false, and vice versa.]

दो०. अपनं चलत न आजु लगि अनभल काहुक कीन्ह ।
केहिं अघ एकहि बार मोहि दैअँ दुसह दुखु दीन्ह ॥ २० ॥

dōhā.

apanēm calata na āju lagi anabhala kāhuka kīnha.
kēhim agha ēkahi bāra mōhi dai'am̐ dusaha dukhu dīnha. 20.

Kaikeyi continued: ‘I have, till this day, never harmed anyone or make anyone suffer for my sake. I don’t know why and for which sinful act the Creator has so suddenly decided to punish me by heaping such great misery upon me.’ (Doha no. 20)

[Note—Here, Kaikeyi shows her astonishment at being targeted by the Creator for enduring punishment for some sinful act she has never ever done. She says she can’t recall of having done any harm to anyone who may have had cursed her then to suffer in like manner, so that the Creator has decided to give effect to that ancient curse to punish her in the way Manthara predicts she would be subjected to soon.

Kaikeyi wonders that since she has led a simple life during which she has never harmed anyone nor harboured any ill-will against person, so why would the Creator single her out for such a severe punishment as making her a maid or a virtual slave of her sister queens, and put her son Bharat behind bars in a prison as Manthara predicts would certainly happen if Lord Ram ascends the throne? {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 19 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it.}

Kaikeyi says: “My husband Dasrath has great affection for me. Had I the habit of harbouring jealousy and ill-will against others, if I had an evil nature of a person who always tried dirty tricks to gain an upper hand over others, I could have very easily pulled the rug from under the feet of Kaushalya in the same way that she now is planning for me. My good and amiable nature is now proving my undoing; it has become my bane. For goodness’ sake, what wrong did I do that I am being subjected to such discrimination and humiliation? Oh my dear friend Manthara, I really must thank thee for alerting me regarding the danger I was leading myself into by being

careless and overconfident that since I am good to others, others would also be good towards me.”]

चौ०. नैहर जनमु भरब बरु जाई । जिअत न करबि सवति सेवकाई ॥ १ ॥

अरि बस दैउ जिआवत जाही । मरनु नीक तेहि जीवन चाही ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

naihara janamu bharaba baru jāī. ji'ata na karabi savati sēvakāī. 1.
ari basa dai'u ji'āvata jāhī. maranu nīka tēhi jīvana cāhī. 2.

Kaikeyi further said: ‘I will spend the rest of my life in my paternal home (i.e. king Kaikaya’s place), but I will never live to serve a life of bondage under my co-wife as her maid or slave¹. (1)

Verily indeed, in all sooth and without gainsay, I affirm that if someone is so unfortunate that the Creator forces that person to live a life of shame and ignominy in bondage under an enemy, then it is better for that person to die than to have such a humiliating existence². (2)

[Note—¹This is a falsehood perpetrated by Manthara to create fear and hatred in Kaikeyi’s mind against Kaushalya, the mother of Lord Ram and her sister-queen. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 19 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it.

²It is better to live a simple life in freedom than to live in luxury under any kind of bondage. This verse emphasizes the importance of having complete freedom in one’s life, for a life of slavery and bondage is not worth living.]

दीन बचन कह बहुबिधि रानी । सुनि कुबरीं तियमाया ठानी ॥ ३ ॥

अस कस कहहु मानि मन ऊना । सुखु सोहागु तुम्ह कहँ दिन दूना ॥ ४ ॥

dīna bacana kaha bahubidhi rānī. suni kubarīm tiyamāyā ṭhānī. 3.
asa kasa kahahu māni mana ūnā. sukhu sōhāgu tumha kahum̐ dina dūnā. 4.

In the aforesaid manner, the queen (Kaikeyi) muttered many a statements of distress and anxiety that depicted how upset she was at the imaginary betrayal by one of her own sister-queens (Kaushalya), and the grave apprehensions it created in her mind about the alarming prospect of being ruined and having all her privileges usurped.

The hunch-backed maid of hers (i.e. Manthara) listened to all this rambling talk with amusement, and feeling glad that her trick was working fine, the wicked woman tightened her tentacles around the queen by resorting to the cunning and deceitful ways usually employed by unscrupulous people in order to achieve their nefarious goals and have their own way over their gullible and unsuspecting victims who have already slipped and fallen into their trap. (3)

Showing false empathy for her distressed mistress and pretending to sympathise with her in times of misfortune (in order to gain Kaikeyi's confidence and have a firmer grip on her victim), the wily hunch-backed said: 'Why do you feel so dejected in your mind, why do you feel so extremely lost, hapless and helpless, that you are so depressed and speak in this forlorn and remorseful manner?

Bless you—let your good luck and happiness as a married woman (*sukhu sōhāgu*) be always on the ascendance, and let them go on increasing manifold by the passing of each day! (4)

जेहिं राउर अति अनभल ताका । सोइ पाइहि यहु फलु परिपाका ॥ ५ ॥
जब तें कुमत सुना मैं स्वामिनि । भूख न बासर नींद न जामिनि ॥ ६ ॥

jēhim rā'ura ati anabhala tākā. sō'i pā'ihī yahu phalu paripākā. 5.
jaba tēm kumata sunā maim svāmini. bhūkha na bāsara nīnda na jāmini. 6.

Let the king (i.e. Dasrath) who has been looking at you with a crooked eye and thinking of your undoing (at the behest of the over jealous queen Kaushalya), let that king now taste the ripe fruit of his own sowing¹. (5)

Oh my honourable ladyship and my respected mistress (*svāmini*)! Ever since I have heard of this wicked plan being laid against you, I have had no hunger during the day, and lost all sleep in the night² (because I am extremely worried for your safety and this concern has made me very upset). (6)

[Note—¹Manthara provoked Kaikeyi by instigating her to seek revenge for the wrong that the king was doing to her. She scornfully said: "Let the king who had played into the hands of one of his wives, i.e. Kaushalya, to plan the ruin of one of his other wives, i.e. you, for no fault of the latter, without judging the right or wrong of his actions—let him now be instrumental in turning the table himself against the vile plotter who had conspired against you and plotted for your ruin, and in the bargain let this selfish and unscrupulous king suffer immensely himself and upturn the garbage bin of ignominy and shame on his own head as well as that of the conspirator. Let the pain and suffering the two, i.e. king Daarath and your sister-queen Kaushalya, had conspired to cause you, boomerang on them; let them taste the bitter taste of the ripened fruit that they hoped they would make you partake of."

Earlier, Kaikeyi has said that in her life she has never thought bad or harm for anyone. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 20.} So, Manthara now exploits this emotion and says that Kaikeyi has been sorely betrayed by those against whom she has never planned any wrong; injustice has been done to her. Hence, she would be within her rights and committing no error if she takes any remedial action to punish those persons who have betrayed and have back-stabbed her, who have undercut her and pulled the rug from under her feet in spite of knowing well about Kaikeyi's good character and amiable nature. Woe betide to such selfish persons; let them be punished and take the same medicine that they want to give others!

²Another bunch of lies! We have already seen that this was the very first day, rather either late in the afternoon or early evening hours of the same day, that Manthara is cooking up fictitious stories before Kaikeyi. The proof of it lies in what we are going

to read very soon in Doha no. 24 along with Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it which say that “when the king, Dasrath, went to meet Kaikeyi in the evening, he discovered that she was absent from her palace, and upon enquiry he found to his utter dismay that she was angry and had gone to the Kopa Bhavan, a section of the palace reserved for senior queens to go to in order to express their anger or resentment at some thing concerning them, because their presence in this building would give a hint to the king that he needs to visit them to redress their grievances.

Not a single day has passed between the day preparations started in Ayodhya for the ceremony to anoint Lord Ram when Manthara saw them, and her rushing back to Kaikeyi to tell her a cock-and-bull story that we have just read. So therefore, her saying that “ever since I have learnt about this crooked plan that has been hatched against you” is outright a falsehood and patently fictitious. As soon as Dasrath had got approval of guru Vasistha, he had ordered preparations to be undertaken for the celebrations to anoint Lord Ram to the throne, and things got rolling immediately. Manthara had seen these preparations that very day, and had learnt that the next day was fixed for the anointment ceremony. So there was no question of many days passing since the celebrations having commenced as she told Kaikeyi. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 4—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 7; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 3-6 that precede Doha no. 11.}

Manthara had started scheming against the coronation and wondered how it can be stopped “this very night”—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 13.

But Kaikeyi was so upset and distressed emotionally that her mind lost its keel and was unable to think properly and coherently so much so that she became susceptible to believing even the most incredulous of things that would otherwise be so obvious that even a blind person could see the reality of their features.

This incident shows us that when a person is mentally distressed and under great duress arising out of a mortal fear of disaster and ruin, he loses his mental bearings and the ability to think wisely and coherently, thereby becoming an easy target for scoundrels and unscrupulous people who see this as a chink in the primary armour of self-defense that Nature has provided all persons in the form of the mind that can think rationally and analytically, as well as the voice of the sixth sense that together would subtly alert the right-thinking person as to what is good or bad for his interests. Exploiting this moment of low guard and weakness, when the person thinks he is sinking and looks desperately for even a straw that would help him survive and keep his boat afloat, the enemy would launch the attack and uproot the unsuspecting victim, who mistakes the enemy to be friend who has come to extend help, from his mooring, and sink his ship while there is time to do so, so that the selfish goal of the enemy could be fulfilled.

In our case, Kaikeyi was so much affrighted by an imaginary fear of a doomed future that she could not see that Manthara was a liar straight away when what she said meant that many days have passed since she came to know that a conspiracy was being hatched against her mistress Kaikeyi.

Come to think of it: Kaikeyi ought to have become suspicious of Manthara immediately; she should have asked her maid why did she keep quiet for all this while, why did not she not inform her immediately if she found there was something wrong, and why is she now coming to inform her that if Lord Ram is appointed “tomorrow”, it will mean doom for Kaikeyi? {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 19.}

Instead of this, Kaikeyi, out of fear for her own security and safety, became so gullible and credulous that she did not suspect any foul play by Manthara, but rather began to treat a wicked maid to be her best well-wisher, and her own family members as her arch enemy. Verily indeed, in all sooth and without gainsay—it is truly said that “evil company ruins a person without exception”.]

पूँछेउं गुनिन्ह रेख तिन्ह खाँची । भरत भुआल होहिं यह साँची ॥ ७ ॥

भामिनि करहु त कहौं उपाऊ । है तुम्हरीं सेवा बस राऊ ॥ ८ ॥

pūmchē'um' guninha rēkha tinha khāmci. bharata bhu'āla hōhim yaha sāmci.

7.

bhāmini karahu ta kahauri upā'ū. hai tumharim sēvā basa rā'ū. 8.

I (said Manthara) have already consulted astrologers who have said in an unequivocal term that it is certain and true that Bharat (Kaikeyi's son) would become a king¹. (7)

Oh my ladyship (bhāmini)! If you are willing to act and do something (but are at a lost not knowing what to do and how to do it), then, if you would be kind to give me your permission, I may take the liberty to make a suggestion to you that would serve you in good stead.

Look, the king is under an obligation to you for some service you had rendered to him in the past². (8)

[Note—¹The falsehood of Manthara is so obvious here: she has not, ever, consulted any astrologer. So, why did she say this? It was a clever ploy to convince Kaikeyi that stars were in her favour, that her son was destined to be a king, but it was her wicked sister-queen Kaushalya who is playing the spoil-sport by prevailing upon her gullible husband, king Dasrath, to make her own son, Lord Ram, as the next king of Ayodhya. The need of the hour, therefore, is a firm and resolute action by Kaikeyi to stop the wrong from happening, and she is bound to succeed in her endeavours because the stars are favouring her son Bharat. Hence, it would not be much difficult to turn the things in her favour only if she had the will and the courage to act—for is it not said that “god helps them who help themselves”, and “fortune favours the enterprising, and not the lazy”, and that “success belongs to him who makes an effort to gain it, and not to him who sits around to curse his luck”, and “one ought to make hay while the sun shines”, and “opportunities don't wait for anyone”, and “one should act while still there is time”.

‘So therefore’, prodded Manthara, ‘oh my dear mistress, make haste and act before it's too late!’

²The story goes that once the wheel of the war chariot of king Dasrath had got detached from its axle, because one of the bolts had broken and fell off during a war he participated in on behalf of the gods against the demons. Kaikeyi was accompanying the king at that time, so she immediately bent over and thrust her fingers into the wheel, preventing the chariot from toppling over. Dasrath won the battle, and when he saw the bleeding finger of Kaikeyi, he was so overwhelmed with gratitude that he asked her to seek boons. Kaikeyi kept them pending, saying she needed nothing then, but would redeem this promise when she deemed it fit later on in

life. It was this service to king Dasrath, that had preserved his life in the battle-field, which had enabled Kaikeyi to exert influence upon her husband in the future. And unfortunately, it was this pending boon which she would now redeem to ask Dasrath to anoint her son Bharat on the throne and send Lord Ram to the forest. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 27; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 29.}

The story of why Kaikeyi got the two boons from Dasrath as narrated herein above has been described in 'Adhyatma Ramayan' of Veda Vyas, in its Ayodhya Kand, Canto 2, verse nos. 66-73.]

दो०. परउँ कूप तुअ बचन पर सकउँ पूत पति त्यागि ।
कहसि मोर दुखु देखि बड़ कस न करब हित लागि ॥ २१ ॥
dōhā.

para'um' kūpa tu'a bacana para saka'um' pūta pati tyāgi.
kahasi mōra dukhu dēkhi baṛa kasa na karaba hita lāgi. 21.

[Kaikeyi was so much under the influence of delusions cast on her by evil stars and an ill destiny that created a mirage of doom and disaster before her that she thought Manthara was now her only hope for survival. She therefore fell flat for the bait thrown by the wicked maid, and it is such an irony of fate that Kaikeyi sought advice from someone who was planning her ruin! It is like the case of a person asking an enemy what to do to protect his interests, or ask a thief for advice as to how best guard his treasure; a mouse asking a cat to tell it where to hide, or a foundering ship asking the water to come on board to save it from going under.

With what she would now tell Manthara, Kaikeyi clearly hinted that she has, by now, begun to trust her maid completely, seeing the latter as her Saviour, without any reservations whatsoever.]

Kaikeyi exhorted Manthara to please help her by giving her an appropriate advice that is best suited to meet this emergency: 'I will fall in a well (to commit suicide) if you tell me to do it, and I can abandon my husband and son at your bidding if you think it is for my good.

Why indeed, you are so moved by my misery and ill-fate that you have gathered courage to tell me something that sounds very offending, for you did not even fear for your own safety by telling me things of such grave consequences, because in case I did not like to hear it I could have punished you severely.

So therefore, it shows how much you care for me and my well-being. Here are you who thinks so much for my good, who is so much worried for me. So, say, why would I not do what you tell me to do for my good?

[Am I so stupid not to follow good advice given me by my trusted and faithful companion that you are? Agreed that I did miss the signs of something evil unfolding against me, but it is due to my good nature that trusts everyone and never thinks that anyone would harm me when I have never harmed anyone in my life; why would anyone ever do it? I just cannot believe that my own kin and family members are out for my blood. My dear and trusty friend (Manthara)! I am rather obliged to you and express my thanks to you to have alerted me in time. Believe me, I rely on you completely, and shall do as you advice me, for I see no better friend and advisor than

you at this time. My son Bharat is not here, and I am surrounded by those who have evil eyes upon me. I seem to be lost in a sea, surrounded by sharks. You are my only beacon of hope, so why should I not follow your advice that is aimed at my own good. So go ahead and tell me what you suggest I ought to do.*]¹ (Doha no. 21)

[Note—¹Though Kaikeyi had several times loud calls from her reasoning mind, sub-conscience and more composed judgment to not treat Lord Ram's anointment as something prejudicial to her interests, and view her queen-sister Kaushalya and her husband king Dasrath with outrageous suspicion, yet she had lost the power to overcome the urge of destiny that was egging her towards ruin and precipitating a calamity that will send everyone in a tailspin of grief, distress and misery for no fault of theirs. Kaikeyi would not have known what to call this, for it was a secret decree of providence that overrules every other decrees, and which hurries us on to be the instruments of our own destruction, even though it be before us, and we push upon it with our eyes wide open. Certainly nothing but such a dark decree of ill-fortune, with its unavoidable misery attending, and from which it was impossible for Kaikeyi to escape, must have pushed her forward against all the calm reasonings and persuasions of her most retired thoughts and voice of the inner-self into going ahead to fall into the trap laid by evil stars that were jealous of peace, prosperity and happiness that were the hallmarks of Ayodhya with such a firm resolution as she had exhibited, that she was ready to fall into a well or abandon even her own son and husband in order to follow the evil advice given to her by the wicked, contemptible, hunch-backed Manthara.

*In this context, the reader will soon read how Kaikeyi praised Manthara and declared that she sees the latter as her best well-wisher in this world: Refer—Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 23 a little while later.]

चौ०. कुबरीं करि कबुली कैकेई । कपट छुरी उर पाहन टेई ॥ १ ॥
लखइ न रानि निकट दुखु कैसैं । चरइ हरित तिन बलिपसु जैसैं ॥ २ ॥
सुनत बात मृदु अंत कठोरी । देति मनहुँ मधु माहुर घोरी ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

kubarīm kari kabulī kaikēī. kapaṭa churī ura pāhana ṭēī. 1.
lakha'i na rāni nikaṭa dukhu kaisēm. cara'i harita tina balipasu jaisēm. 2.
sunata bāta mṛdu anta kaṭhōrī. dēti manahum̐ madhu māhura ghōrī. 3.

The cruel hunch-backed (Manthara), having first won over Kaikeyi's trust, made her surrender herself completely before her¹ as she prepared the latter like a sacrificial animal who is ready to be struck with a knife that has been sharpened and readied for a deep dig right into the victim's heart. (1)

The unfortunate queen (Kaikeyi) could not foresee the impending calamity that was unfolding before her and dangling over her head like a dagger, in the same way as a sacrificial animal that remains oblivious of the imminent danger to its own life even as it continues to happily graze grass in a green field or nibble gleefully at the fodder offered to it before death². (2)

Manthara's words, and the advice she gave Kaikeyi, seemed sweet and well-intentioned on the face of it, but their consequences would be extremely bitter and harsh, as if she was giving her mistress a pill of poison that has been coated with honey to make it taste sweet and pleasant to accept. (3)

[Note—¹In the beginning of the episode, Kaikeyi showed wisdom and maturity, and was skeptical of Manthara and her intentions; she was even angry at her maid for trying to sow a seed of rift, dissent and disharmony in the family by suggesting that queen Kaushalya and king Dasrath were planning against her, and if Lord Ram is appointed on the throne it would mean doom for her and her son Bharat. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 14—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 15.}]

But the wicked hunch-backed woman tried all the trick at deceit and conceit she was expert in to convince Kaikeyi that what she suggested was for her own good, that she has no personal interest in anything, and that if Kaikeyi refused to listen to her then she would repent sorely later on. With such false premises that painted a future of grave danger for Kaikeyi, and with a cunning display of loyalty and fidelity towards her mistress, Manthara finally succeeded in breaking the wall of the fort and bringing her victim to her knees by using craft, deceit, conceit and cunning persuasion. Kaikeyi's initial reluctance gave way to willingness to cooperate with Manthara and do her bidding so much so that she was even ready to abandon her husband, king Dasrath, and her son, Bharat, or even jump into a well to commit suicide if Manthara so advised her to do it. {Refer: Doha no. 21 herein above.}

²In this analogy, Kaikeyi is the sacrificial goat, Manthara is the butcher, and Kaikeyi not being able to judge the gravity of the situation and the seriousness of what she was about to do at the behest of the wicked hunch-backed maid, that would result in an unprecedented calamity and misery befalling on Ayodhya, Lord Ram going to the forest along with his wife Sita and brother Laxma, subsequent to which king Dasrath too would die, is like the sacrificial animal not being aware of the impending death while it cheerfully eats whatever is placed before it before it is killed.

The animal about to be killed is unaware of its fate even as it continues to enjoy eating food offered to it; the poor animal is not worried of death because it is unaware of it. Similarly, Kaikeyi was so overcome with delusions that she could not see the writing on the wall, but thought that she is acting most wisely by following Manthara's advice. Kaikeyi could not judge the grave consequences of following a wicked maid's advice.

A butcher has no mercy for its victim; likewise Manthara showed no regrets at the immensity of the wrong she was about to make Kaikeyi to do, which in turn would make her victim, i.e. Kaikeyi, suffer from humiliation, ignominy and shame for the rest of her life. Even her own son Bharat refused to see her face and talk with her as long as they survived in this world. Bharat's younger brother would punch, kick and drag Manthara by her hairs to punish her for the horrible calamity she has brought on the family.]

कहइ चेरि सुधि अहइ कि नाहीं । स्वामिनि कहिहु कथा मोहि पाहीं ॥ ४ ॥

दुइ बरदान भूप सन थाती । मागहु आजु जुड़ावहु छाती ॥ ५ ॥

kaha'i cēri sudhi aha'i ki nāhīm. svāmini kahihu kathā mōhi pāhīm. 4.
du'i baradāna bhūpa sana thātī. māgahu āju jurāvahu chātī. 5.

The maidservant (Manthara) said: 'Oh my honourable mistress (svāmini)! Do you remember an incident you had narrated to me sometimes in the past? (4)

You had told me on an earlier occasion that the king was so obliged of you that he had promised that he would fulfill two of your wishes, which you had kept pending at that time, requesting the king to grant you the liberty to redeem them at your convenience later on in life¹.

Ask the king to redeem those two promises now, and thereby give comfort to your agitated heart (because once the king gives his assent, all hurdles to your welfare would be removed, and you can then rest in peace if you follow the advice that I shall now be giving you. (5)

[Note—¹The story of why king Dasrath promised Kaikeyi that he would fulfill her two wishes, which she kept pending for redemption later on when she would decide to do so, has been narrated as a note appended to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 21 herein above.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 27; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 28. In these two verses that we shall be reading soon, Kaikeyi has reminded king Dasrath about the two boons he had granted her, and which were still pending with him to be fulfilled. At this, the unsuspecting king said that it is true, and he was willing to grant her four, not only the two pending ones, if she would stop throwing tantrums and grieving as if some doom was about to happen on an occasion that should otherwise be one for rejoicing and celebrations, because the next day Lord Ram is to be anointed to the throne of the kingdom as its next king. Obviously, if the poor king had any inkling of the grave mischief his crooked wife was planning, if he doubted her integrity and honesty, he wouldn't have said that he was ready to "grant her four instead of the only two boons that are pending with him"; he would have warned her that whatever she wanted to ask should be limited to her personal life and its affairs, such as seeking some personal favours of pleasure and comfort, but certainly he would not let her interfere in administrative matters of the kingdom, for that is the prerogative of the monarch, and never his wife whose role is limited to the royal household and its affairs.

Meanwhile, we have already read above that Manthara told Kaikeyi that if the latter would grant her permission to speak, then she would tell her what she ought to do in the prevailing circumstances so that her safety could be safeguarded. Then Kaikeyi had given her full consent, saying that she was willing to do whatever Manthara suggested. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 21 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it.}

Hence, the wicked maid went for the kill by suggesting that Kaikeyi invoke the two promises of king Dasrath that are still pending for fulfillment, and put them to good use now. What was Kaikeyi expected to do? We shall read about it in the following verses.]

सुतहि राजु रामहि बनबासू । देहु लेहु सब सवति हुलासू ॥ ६ ॥
 भूपति राम सपथ जब करई । तब मागेहु जेहिं बचनु न टरई ॥ ७ ॥
 होइ अकाजु आजु निसि बीतें । बचनु मोर प्रिय मानेहु जी तें ॥ ८ ॥

sutahi rāju rāmahi banabāsū. dēhu lēhu saba savati hulāsū. 6.
 bhūpati rāma sapatha jaba kara'ī. taba māgēhu jēhim bacanu na ṭara'ī. 7.
 hō'i akāju āju nisi bītēm. bacanu mōra priya mānēhu jī tēm. 8.

Ask from the king that you want to redeem those two promises now, and as soon as he gives his assent, tell him that, first, you want your son (Bharat) to get the crown of the kingdom, and secondly, that Lord Ram should go to the forest¹. In this way, you will succeed in robbing the joy which your co-wives plan to derive at your cost². (6)

[But remember; don't rush through it. In order to ensure success and pre-empt the chance of the king going back on his words, do as I am telling you.] First make the king take an oath in the name of Lord Ram, so that he does not change his mind and deny you your boons, before asking him to redeem the two boons that are pending with him³. (7)

Mind you, my dear mistress; there is no time to be lost in procrastination, for if nothing is done tonight itself, then with the advent of the dawn of the morrow, everything will be lost for good. Hence, treat my advice as being for your own good and well-being, and make haste. [Remember: tomorrow will be too late; the dawn of tomorrow wilt be the darkest dawn in thine life if thou wouldst not do as I advise thee, and then don't thee ever blame me for thy misfortunes!]' (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 29. Here we would observe that Kaikeyi has followed Manthara's advice in toto, every bit of it, by asking her husband first to make her son Bharat the next king, and then following it up immediately with the second demand of sending Lord Ram to the forest.

Manthara was planning it well. She wanted to make the king promise of making Bharat the king first because if that happens, then all the authority and powers of the kingdom would be in the hands of Kaikeyi's son, and as a king he would be able to subdue all resistance against him in case the king refuses to fulfill the second demand of sending Lord Ram to the forest.

Why did Manthara wish that Lord Ram should go to the forest? One primary reason is that the entire game was being played by goddess Saraswati on behalf of the gods who wished that the Lord go to the forest so that the cruel demons could be eliminated—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 11 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it.

Another reason is that she feared that Lord Ram would present a stiff hurdle to Bharat gaining the throne because the king as well as the citizens were likely to support Lord Ram against Bharat by the virtue of the Lord being the elder brother who would claim that he was being denied his rights, because according to established traditions it is ordained that the eldest son of a king inherits the crown of the kingdom.

Manthara wanted to forestall a revolt against Bharat by banishing his competitor to the forest. If Lord Ram remains out of the way for some time, it would give Bharat ample time to strengthen his hold on the kingdom and its army, silence

his detractors, and firm his grip on the crown. Bharat, in the meantime, would gain popularity and approval of the people with his good conduct and good governance, so much so that when at a later date his elder brother comes back from the forest, the people would have no objection if Bharat continues in power, which would then enable him to keep his other brothers subdued.

So therefore, in the event the king refuses to fulfill the second promise, the main objective of putting the powers of the kingdom in the hands of Kaikeyi's son would have been achieved.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 18; (ii) Doha no. 19 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it.

³Kaikeyi followed this instruction too in full—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precede Doha no. 28.

Why was Manthara skeptical that the king might go back on his words? Well, the reason why the king may rescind on his words is as clear as daylight—Manthara was well aware that the demands that Kaikeyi would place before the king and wanted fulfilled were out-rightly outrageous. She was trespassing limits by interfering in state matters by trying to force the king to commit a grave error by breaking established traditions and openly violating rules of royal inheritance. The king is supposed to be firm and resolute by his nature, and he is expected to weigh all the pros and cons before taking any decision that directly affects affairs of the kingdom. In all probability, therefore, if Kaikeyi does not bind him under some sort of serious oath, then the king is sure to take her to task, sternly rebuking her for showing such impudence as asking for the two ridiculous boons that he cannot ever grant her, that he cannot allow himself to become a helpless victim of a wicked woman's whims and fancies. What will the world say; how is he going to face his own subjects and justify to them the rashness and the ridiculous nature of his decisions, because he had first announced that his eldest son Lord Ram would be appointed on the throne, and even that was done after due consultations with his guru and the royal priest of the kingdom, i.e. sage Vasistha, and then all of a sudden bowing to the wishes of his wife to send Lord Ram to the forest and appoint Bharat on the throne instead? Does he want himself to be called mad or an old fellow who has lost his mental bearings, forcing the ministers and other royal advisors to step in and put the king himself imprisoned within the walls of his palace in the wider interest of the state?]

दो०. बड़ कुघातु करि पातकिनि कहेसि कोपगृहँ जाहु ।
काजु सँवारेहु सजग सबु सहसा जनि पतिआहु ॥ २२ ॥

dōhā.

barā kughātu kari pātakini kahēsi kōpagṛham' jāhu.
kāju samvārēhu sajaga sabu sahasā jani pati'āhu. 22.

After having convinced Kaikeyi that what she was about to do was in her best of interests, the vile Manthara instructed her to go to the 'Kopa Bhavan¹'. She further coaxed Kaikeyi by insisting that if she dithered and failed to do as advised, it would be to her own peril.

She also reminded her gullible mistress that in order to ensure success, she must be vigilant and diligent, and be skillful in the way she tackles the matter, insomuch as she must not be in too much of a haste to ask the king to redeem the two boons pending with him, but first make him renew his pledge under oath before articulating what she wanted him to do². (Doha no. 22)

[Note—¹In ancient times, in a part of the palace where ladies of the royal household lived, a special area was earmarked where anyone of these ladies could go to draw the attention of the king that there is something which has annoyed her, and she wants it taken care of. The word “Kopa” means anger, and “Bhavan” means a house or a group of rooms.

²Manthara has already said it in the previous verses. But she repeats it to make sure that Kaikeyi does not slip. Kaikeyi ought to first make the king take an oath and renew his pledge, and then she was to ask for redemption of the two boons. This would ensure that the king does not go back on his words.

As the events would unfold, Kaikeyi acted her part most dramatically, behaving as if hell was about to lose its moorings and fall upon her, and the Devil has indeed taken hold of her. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 25; (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 30—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 31; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 34.}

What was the approximate time of the day when this conversation between Manthara and Kaikeyi took place? Well, it was either late in the afternoon or early hours of the evening of the same day when it was announced by the king that Lord Ram would be made the Prince-Regent who would naturally and automatically be a full-fledged King after his father, king Dasrath’s death. The proof of it lies in what we are going to read very soon in Doha no. 24 along with Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it which say that “when the king, Dasrath, went to meet Kaikeyi in the evening, he discovered that she was absent from her palace, and upon enquiry he found to his utter dismay that she was angry and had gone to the Kopa Bhavan, a section of the palace reserved for senior queens to go to in order to express their anger or resentment at some thing concerning them, because their presence in this building would give a hint to the king that he needs to visit them to redress their grievances.]

चौ०. कुबरिहि रानि प्रानप्रिय जानी । बार बार बड़ि बुद्धि बखानी ॥ १ ॥

तोहि सम हित न मोर संसारा । बहे जात कइ भइसि अधारा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kubarihi rāni prānapriya jānī. bāra bāra baḍi bud'dhi bakhānī. 1.

tōhi sama hita na mōra sansārā. bahē jāta ka'i bha'isi adhārā. 2.

The queen (Kaikeyi) treated the crooked hunch-backed maid (Manthara) as being dearest to her, and as precious to her as her own life. She repeatedly praised the immensity of intelligence and wisdom of her maid¹. (1)

Overwhelmed with gratitude, Kaikeyi heaped praises on Manthara when she said: ‘There is no one who I consider a better well-wisher of mine in this world than you

are; you have become a buoy and a saviour for me who was adrift and being swept away by the tide of ill fate. (2)

[Note—¹By this time, Kaikeyi's mind had been so deluded, brain-washed and made biased by Manthara's arguments and persuasion skills that she thought, and was mightily convinced, that this maid of hers was the only one who worries about her good, and in the midst of enemies she is her only friend and helper. Sure enough, Manthara would have hissed under her breath, bitten her lips gleefully and smirked in satisfaction, just like a hunter woman would do to rejoice when she succeeds in trapping her prey.]

जौं बिधि पुरब मनोरथु काली । करौं तोहि चख पूतरि आली ॥ ३ ॥
बहुबिधि चेरिहि आदरु देई । कोपभवन गवनी कैकेई ॥ ४ ॥

jaum̐ bidhi puraba manōrathu kālī. karaum̐ tōhi cakha pūtari ālī. 3.
bahubidhi cērihi ādaru dē'ī. kōpabhavana gavanī kaikē'ī. 4.

Oh my dear friend (ālī)! If my wishes are fulfilled tomorrow, I will surely embrace you and make you an apple of my eye, making you my dearest and closest companion.' (3)

In this way, after lavishing Manthara with praises, and lauding her wisdom and initiative, Kaikeyi went to the 'Kopa Bhavan'. (4)

बिपति बीजु बरषा रितु चेरी । भुइँ भइ कुमति कैकई केरी ॥ ५ ॥
पाइ कपट जलु अंकुर जामा । बर दोउ दल दुख फल परिनामा ॥ ६ ॥

bipati bīju baraṣā ritu cērī. bhu'im̐ bha'i kumati kaika'ī kērī. 5.
pā'i kapaṭa jalu aṅkura jāmā. bara dō'u dala dukha phala parināmā. 6.

Alas! In this unfortunate and sad episode, misfortunes and untold misery that were to befall upon everyone concerned were like the 'seed' that was sown in the 'ground of misguided mind' of Kaikeyi, and made to sprout and grow swiftly by 'the water of the rainy season' symbolized by the wicked advice given by maid servant (Manthara)! (5)

The seed has been 'nourished' by the water of deceit and conceit poured upon it (by the vile gardener representing Manthara); it then sprouted and matured into a 'flower' of which the two pending boons (given to Kaikeyi by king Dasrath) were the 'petals', and the grave consequence that would follow is the 'bitter fruit' of this evil seed¹. (6)

[Note—¹These two verses are a brilliant example of the use of metaphors and similes used quite frequently by Goswami Tulsidas throughout his writings. We will come across other wonderful instances later on in our reading, especially when he describes the scene at Mt. Prabarshan where Lord Ram and Laxman abided for some time before the campaign to find the whereabouts of Sita was launched. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Doha no. 13—to Doha no. 17.}

First the 'seed' is sown, it is then 'watered and nourished', it then 'sprouts' and grows into a tree that bears 'flowers', which ultimately produce a 'fruit'. The seed is underground just like the conspiracy hatched by Manthara that too was a secret matter. To give effect to her evil plans, she found Kaikeyi as a fertile ground to sow the seed. Seed would have died, but Manthara watered it with stories of falsehood and deceit. When the bud formed and the time came for the matured flower of this evil seed to open, the two pending boons became its petals. And finally, the bitter fruit that would be produced by this evil seed would be the endless sorrows and miseries that would descend upon Ayodhya with the maturing of the flower of deceit, conceit and wickedness.]

कोप समाजु साजि सबु सोई । राजु करत निज कुमति बिगोई ॥ ७ ॥
राउर नगर कोलाहलु होई । यह कुचालि कछु जान न कोई ॥ ८ ॥

kōpa samāju sāji sabu sō'ī. rāju karata nija kumati bigō'ī. 7.
rā'ura nagara kōlāhalu hō'ī. yaha kucāli kachu jāna na kō'ī. 8.

Gathering all the paraphernalia around her to indicate that she was very angry, Kaikeyi went to the Kopa Bhavan and lied down (with a grave face, a sullen mood, and an agitated body).

It is such an irony of fate and a cruelty of destiny that even while leading a life of peace, harmony and royal comfort, she would push herself unnecessarily over the cliff to plunge headlong into a miserable life of ignominy and shame, for no rhyme or reason. (7)

Meanwhile, there was great excitement in the king's city (rā'ura nagara; i.e. in Ayodhya) as preparations for Lord Ram's anointment were under way, because no one was aware of this evil conspiracy (that was hatched behind their backs). (8)

दो०. प्रमुदित पुर नर नारि सब सजहिं सुमंगलचार ।
एक प्रबिसहिं एक निर्गमहिं भीर भूप दरबार ॥ २३ ॥
dōhā.

pramudita pura nara nāri saba sajahim sumaṅgalacāra.
ēka prabisahim ēka nirgamahim bhīra bhūpa darabāra. 23.

The citizens, both males and females, were exuberant; all were arranging auspicious items that would be needed to celebrate the moment when Lord Ram would ascend the throne. The excitement and enthusiasm were palpable; everyone wished to participate in the celebrations and be a witness of this momentous occasion.

There was a great rush in the king's courtyard as multitudes of cheerful citizens entered and exited the gates of the royal palace¹. (Doha no. 23)

[Note—¹We would note that in those days, the kings had nothing to fear from their subjects with respect to their security. The citizens loved their king as a head of an extended family, and everyone had access to the outer courtyard of the royal palace as

and when one wished to approach the king with a petition. The gates of the royal palace were thrown open on special occasions such as the present one, when Lord Ram was to be anointed as the Prince-Regent. No one asked who was coming in, and no one asked who was going out.

It was definitely not like the world of today when even in a democracy, the elected representatives of the people fear for their lives from the very people who have elected them. These ‘people’s representatives’ surround themselves with a multi-layered thick cordon of security, building around themselves an impregnable fort of inaccessibility which keeps the poor common man at a yard’s distance like an outcaste or an untouchable, making the latter wonder if this was why he had elected this fellow to make himself a self-declared demi-god who is to be worshipped and bowed before from a distance, but who would never be ready to acknowledge or remember that he owes his exalted stature to this untouchable poor man whom he now abhors like a plague!

We find such instances of the people of Ayodhya having free access to the royal palace elsewhere also in Ram Charit Manas—apropos: Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 194 (at the time of birth of Lord Ram and his brothers); and (ii) Doha no. 345 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it, (iii) Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 352 (when the marriage procession of Lord Ram and his brothers returned to Ayodhya from Janakpur).

We have already read that the crow saint Kaagbhusund and Lord Shiva had also found this opening of the gates of the royal palace a way to freely enter and exit its walls to meet and greet Lord Ram at the time of his birth, without any hindrance, with no one asking who they were—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 196.]

चौ०. बाल सखा सुनि हियँ हरषाहीं । मिलि दस पाँच राम पहिं जाहीं ॥ १ ॥

प्रभु आदरहिं प्रेमु पहिचानी । पूँछहिं कुसल खेम मृदु बानी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

bāla sakhā suni hiyaṁ haraṣāhīm. mili dasa pām̐ca rāma pahim̐ jāhīm. 1.
prabhu ādarahim̐ prēmu pahicānī. pūṁchahim̐ kusala khēma mṛdu bānī. 2.

The childhood friends of Lord Ram (i.e. the citizen-boys of his age with whom the Lord used to play and spend his days as a child¹) were especially exhilarated when they heard that the prince, who was their dear friend and companion ever since their childhood days, was about to be elevated to the throne. They gathered themselves and formed small groups of ten and five members, and went to the palace to meet and congratulate their childhood friend, Lord Ram. (1)

The Lord welcomed all of them warmly and affectionately, asking them about their welfare and how did they do most sweetly and affably. (2)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 205.]

फिरहिं भवन प्रिय आयसु पाई । करत परसपर राम बड़ाई ॥ ३ ॥

को रघुबीर सरिस संसारा । सीलु सनेहु निबाहनिहारा ॥ ४ ॥

phirahim bhavana priya āyasu pāī. karata parasapara rāma baṛāī. 3.
kō raghubīra sarisa sansārā. sīlu sanēhu nibāhanihārā. 4.

The Lord's friends took leave of him and cheerfully returned home, all the while praising the Lord lavishly and lauding his amiable nature amongst themselves. (3)

They said to each other: 'Say, who is comparable to Lord Ram in this world! Say, who has such exemplary courtesy, good nature and amiable character that he would honour and reciprocate the other person's affection in equal terms, without any prejudice, and without having any trace of distinction and ego in him that would make the other person feel uncomfortable¹. (4)

[Note—¹The childhood friends of Lord Ram were so overcome with gratitude and joy at the warmth and affection with which they were received by the Lord that they said: "Oh friends! Lord Ram is indeed so nice that he still honours and remembers the days of our childhood friendship, for he shows no arrogance, aloofness or a sense of distinction that usually comes when someone is about to ascend the throne of a great kingdom. He acted so nicely with us to indicate that there is no difference between him and us now that he is about to become a king and we are to remain ordinary citizens under him. See, how affectionately he welcomed us and talked cheerfully with us, even joking with us and reminding us of the days we used to laugh and play together when we were children. He showed no sign that he would be a king soon, and that it was high time for us to follow protocol and show respect to him as our king. He did not hint that now onwards we ought to maintain court dignity and observe the niceties that every subject is expected to show to his king.

Wow; this is unexpectedly warm and welcome! Why, say, wouldn't anyone of us lay down our lives willingly for Lord Ram? Yes, we all would join hands to support our beloved friend and playmate Lord Ram throughout our lives—we unanimously make a solemn pledge on this!"] (4)

जेहिं जेहिं जोनि करम बस भ्रमहीं । तहँ तहँ ईसु देउ यह हमहीं ॥ ५ ॥

सेवक हम स्वामी सियनाहू । होउ नात यह ओर निबाहू ॥ ६ ॥

jēhim jēhim jōni karama basa bhramahīm. taham̐ taham̐ īsu dē'u yaha hamahīm. 5.

sēvaka hama svāmī siyanāhū. hō'u nāta yaha ōra nibāhū. 6.

Oh our God and Creator (īsu)! Grant us our wish that in whichever form we take birth in our future lives owing to the deeds that we do in any of our present lives, --- (5)

---Let us have Lord Ram (the dear husband of Sita; "siyanāhū") as our Lord, and we are his servants and subjects in all our future births. Oh God, grant us this wish that this bond of affection and nearness that exists between us (i.e. Lord Ram and our individual selves) is sustained forever, and it can stand the test of time!¹ (6)

[Note—¹Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chanda line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 10 where Bali, the king of Kishkindha, has sought a similar blessing for himself at the time of his death.

Similar idea is expressed elsewhere in different ways in Ram Charit Manas. For instance, see: (a) Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 121 (the villagers whom Lord Ram met on his way to the forest); (ii) Doha nos. 129 and 131 (sage Valmiki); (b) Aranya Kand, (iii) Doha no. 11 along with Chaupai line nos. 20-21, and 26 that precede it (sage Sutikshan); (iv) Chaupai line nos. 10-11 that precede Doha no. 13 (sage Agastya); (v) Doha no. 32 (the vulture Jatau).]

अस अभिलाषु नगर सब काहू । कैकयसुता हृदयँ अति दाहू ॥ ७ ॥
को न कुसंगति पाइ नसाई । रहइ न नीच मतेँ चतुराई ॥ ८ ॥

asa abhilāṣu nagara saba kāhū. kaikayasutā hrdayam'ati dāhū. 7.
kō na kusaṅgati pā'i nasā'ī. raha'i na nīca matēṁ caturā'ī. 8.

In this way it is such an irony of fate that while on the one hand everyone in the city had the wish that Lord Ram should be their King, and that they should be able to serve him as his subjects, and on the other hand, the daughter of king Kaikaya (i.e. Kaikeyi) had her heart burning with an opposite wish (that Lord Ram must not become a king)! (7)

Indeed, in all sooth, and without gainsay, there is truth and substance in the adage that says: “who has not come to ruin and destruction by keeping bad company”, and “a person loses his wisdom if he falls prey to evil advice of a vile companion”¹. (8)

[Note—¹This observation refers to Kaikeyi who has fallen prey to the evil advice of her vile companion Manthara, which lead to all the misery, grief, hate, shame and ignominy that she was subjected to for the rest of her life.]

दो०. साँझ समय सानंद नृपु गयउ कैकई गेहँ ।
गवनु निठुरता निकट किय जनु धरि देह सनेहँ ॥ २४ ॥
dōhā.

sām̐jha samaya sānanda nrpu gaya'u kaika'ī gēham'.
gavanu niṭhuratā nikaṭa kiya janu dhari dēha sanēham'. 24.

Meanwhile, king Dasrath cheerfully went to Kaikeyi's residence in the evening (with the intention of conveying the good news of Lord Ram's ascension to the throne to her personally)¹—as if a personified form of happiness (that Dasrath represented) was going to meet its beta noire in the form of stubbornness and harshness (personified in the form of Kaikeyi)². (Doha no. 24)

[Note—¹The king, Dasrath, was totally oblivious of what was happening behind his back. So, as evening approached, he decided to visit Kaikeyi personally to convey the good news to her, that Lord Ram would ascend the throne the next day. Now we see

why Kaikeyi was not informed earlier about the king's decision to anoint Lord Ram. The king wanted to surprise her personally with this good news; he loved Kaikeyi more than his other wives, so he thought it would be proper to break the news himself instead of through a messenger. But unfortunately this simple and harmless delay proved very dangerous for the king, as it was exploited by Manthara to drill a fake story into Kaikeyi's head that the king wanted to hide Lord Ram's anointment from her, and that was why she wasn't informed till that time—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 17; (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 19.

²Dasrath was very jubilant and happy as he went to Kaikeyi's palace, little realizing what was in store for him. It is like the case of a sacrificial animal that is not aware what doom faces it while it heads to the slaughter house. It is also like the case of a fish jumping gleefully up and down the surface of the water of the sea on a sunny morning, not realizing that with the next merry leap it will land in the fishmonger's net.]

चौ०. कोपभवन सुनि सकुचेउ राऊ । भय बस अगहुड़ परइ न पाऊ ॥ १ ॥
 सुरपति बसइ बाहँबल जाकेँ । नरपति सकल रहहिँ रुख ताकेँ ॥ २ ॥
 सो सुनि तिय रिस गयउ सुखाई । देखहु काम प्रताप बड़ाई ॥ ३ ॥
 सूल कुलिस असि अँगवनिहारे । ते रतिनाथ सुमन सर मारे ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

kōpabhavana suni sakucē'u rā'ū. bhaya basa agahuṛa para'i na pā'ū. 1.
 surapati basa'i bāham̐bala jākēm̐. narapati sakala rahahim̐ rukha tākēm̐. 2.
 sō suni tiya risa gaya'u sukhā'ī. dēkhahu kāma pratāpa barā'ī. 3.
 sūla kulisa asi am̐gavanihārē. tē ratinātha sumana sara mārē. 4.

No sooner did king Dasrath reach Kaikeyi's palace, and not finding her there, than he enquired from the attendants where had she gone, and to his great dismay he learnt that she had gone to the Kopa Bhavan, the news that made him very distraught.

He was sore affright and overcome with apprehension (because he knew Kaikeyi's whimsical nature and mercurial temperament) so much so that his feet felt heavy and refused to move as he dragged himself to the section of the palace where she had gone. (1)

Imagine the irony of the situation! This was no ordinary king, but one so powerful and strong that even the king of gods sought his support and help to retain his throne in the heaven (because whenever the demons attacked the gods, Indra sought king Dasrath's help, for he had always enabled the gods to vanquish their adversaries).

It was not only Indra but even all the other rulers of men in this world (i.e. all the monarchs and kings of this earth) were obliged to king Dasrath; they would always seek his goodwill, blessings and patronage, and held him in great esteem. (2)

This same king Dasrath shriveled and shrunk in fear, and felt helplessly distraught upon learning that his wife has become angry at him!

This shows how great and powerful is the force of ‘Kaam’ (the patron god of passion and love that makes a person subservient to the lover) that it would subdue such a mighty king whose firmness of resolution and strength of character were legendary and without a parallel (in other spheres of life)¹. (3)

The mighty king Dasrath, who could very easily cope with the attack of his enemies who used such powerful weapons as tridents, spears and swords against him in the countless battles that he fought and won, had ironically succumbed to an arrow shot by Kaam, the god of passion and love, because this force of Nature is too strong to resist. Even Lord Shiva had succumbed to the arrow made of flowers that was shot at him by Kaamdeo². This being the case, what can one expect from others? No wonder then that Dasrath would succumb to the force of Kaam. (4)

[Note—¹Kaam, a personified form of ‘Cupid’ representing lust, passion and desire, is a mighty force of Nature, too strong to overcome or resist easily.

This king, i.e. Dasrath, was exceptionally powerful, had an excellent character, and was firm in his resolutions. He did not fear even the demons who would send shivers in the spine of the gods; all the combined strengths of great monarchs and rulers of this earth was no match against Dasrath so much so that these rulers thought it best not to annoy king Dasrath on any account, but would always keep him happy and pay tributes to him to keep him in good humour.

But Kaam, i.e. the influence that passions and love would have on a person who is subdued by the opposite sex because he or she can’t live without the latter, had overcome Dasrath so much, holding him in its firm grip, that he proved too weak to resist it. Dasrath could boldly and bravely face demons and other enemies in the battle-field, but he buckled underneath when faced by Kaam. While he could move stridently, resolutely and confidently to confront his mighty enemies in a battle, he stumbled and tottered as his legs shook at the prospect of facing the enemy known as ‘Kaam’ symbolized by his wife Kaikeyi with whom he was passionately in love!

The idea that is sought to be conveyed here is that no matter how firm and resolute a person is, no matter how strong his character is, but there is one force of Nature that is more often than not difficult to resist and overcome, and it is called ‘Kaam’. If a person is able to resist the temptation of Kaam, then in reality he is a true warrior. Kaam would trounce greatest of ascetics and renunciates with ease; great sages performing Tapa (severe penances and austerities for their spiritual elevation and finding liberation and deliverance from this mortal world) had slipped when Kaam personified in the form of Apsaras (beautiful damsels of heavenly charm) had bewitched them. In this context we should recall the episode of sage Narad which we have already read earlier in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 124—to Doha no. 138.

²This entire episode is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Sortha no. 75—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 89.]

सभय नरेसु प्रिया पहिं गयऊ । देखि दसा दुखु दारुन भयऊ ॥ ५ ॥

भूमि सयन पटु मोट पुराना । दिए डारि तन भूषन नाना ॥ ६ ॥

sabhaya narēsu priyā pahim gaya'ū. dēkhi dasā dukhu dārūna bhaya'ū. 5.
bhūmi sayana paṭu mōṭa purānā. di'ē ḍāri tana bhūṣana nānā. 6.

The king (Dasrath) was filled with fear and apprehension when he went to his dear wife (Kaikeyi). When he saw her miserable condition, he felt very distraught and sad. (5)

He found her lying on the ground on some tattered old rug, wearing worn-out clothes herself. She had taken off all her ornaments that she had scattered all around her on the ground. (6)

कुमतिहि कसि कुबेषता फाबी । अन अहिवातु सूच जनु भाबी ॥ ७ ॥
जाइ निकट नृपु कह मृदु बानी । प्रानप्रिया केहि हेतु रिसानी ॥ ८ ॥

kumatihi kasi kubēṣatā phābī. ana ahivātu sūca janu bhābī. 7.
jā'i nikaṭa nṛpu kaha mṛdu bānī. prānapriyā kēhi hētu risānī. 8.

The unfortunate Kaikeyi's grieving demeanours, her disheveled appearance and her generally distressed and miserable condition eminently suited her as if Providence was hinting at the prospect of widowhood¹ that stared her in the face. (7)

Meanwhile, the king softly approached her and asked sweetly, in a voice as affectionate and affable as he could muster to speak, 'Oh my beloved who is dear to me like my own life (prānapriyā)! Say, tell me why art thou so angry; what annoys thee.' (8)

[Note—¹By and by, king Dasrath would die due to the shock of separation from Lord Ram, which would mean widowhood for Kaikeyi. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 155 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it.]

छं०. केहि हेतु रानि रिसानि परसत पानि पतिहि नेवारई । १ ।
मानहुँ सरोष भुअंग भामिनि बिषम भाँति निहारई ॥ २ ॥
दोउ बासना रसना दसन बर मरम ठाहरु देखई । ३ ।
तुलसी नृपति भवतव्यता बस काम कौतुक लेखई ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

kēhi hētu rāni risāni parasata pāni patihi nēvāra'ī. 1.
mānahum' sarōṣa bhu'aṅga bhāmini biṣama bhāmṭi nihāra'ī. 2.
dō'u bāsanā rasanā dasana bara marama ṭhāharu dēkha'ī. 3.
tulasī nṛpati bhavatabyatā basa kāma kautuka lēkha'ī. 4.

The king said once again to Kaikeyi: 'Say my dear queen, why art thou so angry?'

Saying this, the king touched her softly. But seething in anger, Kaikeyi firmly shook his hands off with a rude jerk. (Chanda line no. 1)

She glared at him furiously with contempt as if a female serpent was looking angrily with fiery eyes at her prey. (Chanda line no. 2)

Kaikeyi looked indeed like an angry serpent ready to pounce upon its victim. The two wishes she had concealed in her heart were like the desire of the she-serpent to bite her victim viciously; the two boons of which she would speak in order to give effect to her desires were like the two fangs (or the bifurcated tongue) of the she-serpent which she uses to bite the victim; and her furiously eyeing king Dasrath was akin to the she-serpent determining the right opportunity to lunge at the victim to dig her fang in his most sensitive part. (Chanda line no. 3)

Goswami Tulsidas (the poet-saint who had written this book Ram Charit Manas) observes: “It is so unfortunate and incredulous that the otherwise so wise king Dasrath would be so deluded and overcome by the powerful influence of ‘Kaam’ that he would fall in the trap and thought that these tantrums of Kaikeyi were part of her amorous design to provoke her husband’s passions and test his patience.”¹ (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹Tulsidas says that it is unbelievable that king Dasrath, who was so wise and firm in his character, would so easily fall in the trap of Kaikeyi and succumb. He was so deluded by the influence of Kaam that instead of seeing things straight in the eye and becoming alert that there was something serious to be dealt with, he thought that his beloved wife was playing an amorous game with him by pushing off his hands and looking sideways at him in order to arouse his passions. He thought that since he has not visited her for sometime, she was in a heat of passion, and showed her suppressed desire by venting her ire at him.]

सो०. बार बार कह राउ सुमुखि सुलोचनि पिकबचनि ।
कारन मोहि सुनाउ गजगामिनि निज कोप कर ॥ २५ ॥
sōraṭhā.

bāra bāra kaha rā'u sumukhi sulōcani pikabacani.
kārana mōhi sunā'u gajagāmini nija kōpa kara. 25.

The king repeatedly tried to assuage her feelings by using polite words to ask her the cause of her annoyance. He said: ‘Oh my dear who has a sweet face (sumukhi), beautiful eyes (sulōcani), and who speaks sweetly like a cuckoo (pikabacani) and walks with a majestic gait like that of a she-elephant (gajagāmini)! Tell me the reason for thine anger.’ (Sortha no. 25)

[Note—The king praises the physical beauty of Kaikeyi as he thinks that since women love being praised for their beauty, it would calm down his angry wife. The use of the term ‘repeatedly’ (bāra bāra) implies that Kaikeyi was silent; she did not reply to Dasrath’s enquiry as to what was that thing which had made her so angry.]

चौ०. अनहित तोर प्रिया केइँ कीन्हा । केहि दुइ सिर केहि जमु चह लीन्हा ॥ १ ॥

कहु केहि रंकहि करौं नरेसू । कहु केहि नृपहि निकासौं देसू ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

anahita tōra priyā kē'im' kīnhā. kēhi du'i sira kēhi jamu caha līnhā. 1.
kahu kēhi raṅkahi karaum narēsū. kahu kēhi nṛpahi nikāsaum dēsū. 2.

[The following set of verses would show king Dasrath in poor light. They will show us how overcome with passion and how great a victim of lust he had become that he would be so desperate to please his wife at all costs.]

King Dasrath said to Kaikeyi: ‘Tell me my dear (priyā), who hast durst to offend thee? Who is so doomed as to have two heads, with one to spare being cut-off by me for having had the temerity of offending thee? Say, who is in the throes of death and willing to go to the Death God voluntarily, for in all sooth I shalt fulfill his this desire? (1)

Tell me, which pauper doth thou want to be made a king, and which king doth thou wish to be dethroned and exiled from his kingdom. (2)

[Note—The king is acting so unwisely indeed. He didn’t weigh the consequences of what he was saying. Would it be possible or justified at all to make a worthless pauper a king, or dethrone and exile a king for no fault of his, except that he may have caused some sort of annoyance to Dasrath’s wife, even if it was imaginary? What would the world say; this is not the way great kings and emperors rule their realm and take decisions; this is no way to decide administrative, diplomatic and political matters of state that would have far reaching consequences by simply complying to the whim and fancy of a wicked woman. How can one expect that a great king of Dasrath’s stature would stoop so low as to act so whimsically and rashly merely to satisfy his wife?

King Dasrath did not think of any of these things while making tall promises to please his enraged wife.]

सकउँ तोर अरि अमरउ मारी । काह कीट बपुरे नर नारी ॥ ३ ॥

जानसि मोर सुभाउ बरोरू । मनु तव आनन चंद चक्रोरू ॥ ४ ॥

saka'um' tōra ari amara'u mārī. kāha kīṭa bapurē nara nārī. 3.
jānasi mōra subhā'u barōrū. manu tava ānana canda cakōrū. 4.

‘If the need arises, I canst even slay thine enemy though he be blessed with the boon of immortality, then say what do ordinary men and women count who art no better than insects and worms? [To wit, just tell me who has offended thee, and I shalt immediately get rid of the rascal.] (3)

Oh the beautiful one (barōrū)! Doth thou naught wot that my mind is enamoured of thine moon-like sweet face just like the Chakor bird¹ that fixes its gaze on the full moon because it is in love with the latter and admires its beauty? [To wit, tell me, is it not known to you that I love you exceedingly, and that my mind adores your beauty

like a chakor bird that admires the charm of the full moon and keeps its attention fixed on the latter?)] (4)

[Note—¹The ‘Chakor’ is the Indian red-legged partridge. It is believed that this bird is so fascinated by the charm of the disc of the full moon that as soon as the latter rises in the eastern horizon, the bird turns its head towards it. It then follows the course of the moon across the sky till it sets in the western horizon.

Dasrath uses this example to stress how much he is in love with and enamoured of Kaikeyi. Perhaps Dasrath had overdone his praise for this wicked queen, for she treated it as a complete surrender of her husband before her, and this belief was bolstered further by the other statements of the king which together gave her the impression that he would willingly do her bidding, no matter how incredibly ridiculous, incredulous and incongruous it might be.

Had the king been a little wiser and thoughtful, he ought to have acted carefully, for he must have known by now that Kaikeyi had some mischief up her mind by the way she behaved, for he was well aware of her crooked, selfish and wicked nature not to have clearly seen warning signs of an impending storm. But why then did he succumb so easily? Well, the answer is obvious: that though Dasrath was a man of firmness and resolution in all other matters, but his weakness lay in his being passionate and lustful, for he could not resist the temptations of sensual pleasures and its accompanying desires for sense gratification as has been explicitly mentioned in the verses herein above about him. This lacuna in his character, this chink in his armour was his undoing.]

प्रिया प्रान सुत सरबसु मोरें । परिजन प्रजा सकल बस तोरें ॥ ५ ॥

जौं कछु कहौं कपटु करि तोही । भामिनि राम सपथ सत मोही ॥ ६ ॥

priyā prāna suta sarabasu mōrēm. parijana prajā sakala basa tōrēm. 5.
jauṁ kachu kahauṁ kapaṭu kari tōhī. bhāmini rāma sapatha sata mōhī. 6.

‘Oh my beloved (priyā)! Whatever I possess, such as my very life, my sons, the subjects of my kingdom, all its wealth, nay, everything and everyone who is under me is at your disposal too. (5)

Oh my dear lady (bhāmini)! If I am saying any sort of lie, if I am employing deceit and conceit with thee by taking recourse to falsehood regarding all that I have told thee—then I invoke an oath in the name of Lord Ram to the effect that I should invite the wrath of breaking a solemn vow of speaking nothing but the truth to thee¹. (6)

[Note—¹King Dasrath takes the oath in the name of Lord Ram because the Lord was his eldest son, most dear to him, and his heir. Hence, Dasrath would not do anything that would bring harm to the Lord. So therefore, in order to convince Kaikeyi that what he says is the truth, and he is not being pretentious in any way whatsoever, the king invokes Lord Ram while making an oath in his name to stress that he is not lying to Kaikeyi.]

बिहसि मागु मनभावति बाता । भूषन सजहि मनोहर गाता ॥ ७ ॥
घरी कुघरी समुझि जियँ देखू । बेगि प्रिया परिहरहि कुबेष्टू ॥ ८ ॥

bihasi māgu manabhāvati bātā. bhūṣana sajahī manōhara gātā. 7.
gharī kugharī samujhi jiyam̐ dēkhū. bēgi priyā pariharahi kubēṣū. 8.

‘Therefore, oh my dear, cheer up and ask whatever the desire of thy heart is (and it shalt be fulfilled). Get up and adorn thy charming body with thine ornaments (that thou have taken off and scattered all around the place)¹. (7)

Please consider the occasion and determine thyself in your heart whether or not it is the right and opportune time to grieve and lament in the way thou art doing.

So oh my beloved (priyā), get up immediately and discard the unbecoming attire of thine that thou havest donned as it does not behoove thee at all². [This is not the time to lament and wail as if some immense misery hast befallen upon thee, for it is the time to rejoice and celebrate instead. It beats me and is beyond mine comprehension to understand why wouldst thou feel so sorrowful and woeful at a time when thou ought to have been celebrating and rejoicing.]³ (8)

[Note—¹Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 25.

²Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 25.

³The king would soon tell Kaikeyi why it was not the proper time for her to lament, wail and grieve—because it was a momentous occasion and a time of happiness and joy, as Lord Ram is to be anointed as a Prince-Regent and the future King of Ayodhya. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 27.

The unsuspecting king thought that this information would surely make her jump with joy, for she loved Lord Ram dearly herself; even Kaikeyi has herself acknowledged it to Manthara earlier—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 15.

So, by and by, king Dasrath would be in for a rude shock when his information that Lord Ram is to be appointed to the throne the next day would incite Kaikeyi and ignite her wrath, pouring oil to the fire of her raging anger—apropos: Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 27 herein below.]

दो०. यह सुनि मन गुनि सपथ बड़ि बिहसि उठी मतिमंद ।
भूषन सजति बिलोकि मृगु मनहुँ किरातिनि फंद ॥ २६ ॥
dōhā.

yaha suni mana guni sapatha baḍi bihasi uṭhī matimanda.
bhūṣana sajati bilōki mṛgu manahum̐ kirātini phanda. 26.

When Kaikeyi heard these pleadings of king Dasrath and thought of the gravity of the oath he has taken (in the name of Lord Ram), she got up with a wicked smile¹, and put her ornaments back on her body as if a hunter woman was glad that the poor deer is ready to fall into her traps². (Doha no. 26)

[Note—¹Kaikeyi had a sudden idea when king Dasrath took oath in the name of Lord Ram—refer: Chaupai line no. 6 herein above. She decided that she would ask the king that if he wants her to cheer up now, then he should first make a solemn pledge and take an oath in the name of Lord Ram, just like the way he has done just now, to promise her that he would surely redeem the two boons that were still pending with him, so that he does not rescind on his promise and go back on his words when he discovers that what Kaikeyi wants does not suit him. This is also exactly what Manthara had advised her—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 22.

This is the reason why she smiled: that apparently the king has fallen right into the trap laid by her.

²Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 28 that follows herein below soon.]

चौ०. पुनि कह राउ सुहृद जियँ जानी । प्रेम पुलकि मृदु मंजुल बानी ॥ १ ॥

भामिनि भयउ तोर मनभावा । घर घर नगर अनंद बधावा ॥ २ ॥

रामहि देउँ कालि जुबराजू । सजहि सुलोचनि मंगल साजू ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

puni kaha rā'u suhr̥da jiyam̃ jānī. prēma pulaki mṛdu maṇjula bānī. 1.

bhāmini bhaya'u tōra manabhāvā. ghara ghara nagara ananda badhāvā. 2.

rāmahi dē'um̃ kāli jubarājū. sajahi sulōcani maṅgala sājū. 3.

King Dasrath thought that Kaikeyi has mellowed down and would be amenable when he saw her smiling and putting her ornaments back on her body. This he took as an encouraging sign, which thrilled him and gave him courage to renew his attempt to pacify his enraged wife, so he spoke to her sweetly once again¹ --- (1)

‘My dear lady (bhāmini)! See, your heart’s desire is about to be fulfilled². The whole city is celebrating, and each household is rejoicing with felicitous songs being sung to mark the happy occasion. (2)

Tomorrow, you will be glad to hear, I am anointing Lord Ram to the throne as Prince-Regent³. It is a time to rejoice and celebrate. So my dear who has beautiful eyes (sulōcani); prepare for the festivities and arrange all the things that are needed for this auspicious occasion.’ (3)

[Note—¹The innocent and unsuspecting king was most polite in his approach as he thought that Kaikeyi’s anger was superficial and transient, as it was in her nature to be angry at trifle matters that are not at all as serious as she always made them out to be, and that she has finally softened and cooled down when he had politely assuaged her ruffled feelings.

²Then the king thought that he would surprise her with the good news of Lord Ram's anointment to the throne, for he knew that she loved the Lord dearly, and no less than her own son Bharat. He thought that as soon as she comes to know of it, she would be exceptionally happy, and whatever it was that had annoyed her to the extent that she came to the Kopa Bhavan to vent her anger would be forgotten by her in the light of the good news of Lord Ram's elevation to the throne.

³King Dasrath did not send any messenger earlier in the day to inform Kaikeyi of his decision to anoint Lord Ram to the throne because he decided that he would visit her personally at the end of the day to tell her the good news. This is actually what he did, for he came to Kaikeyi's palace in the evening, only to find that she was not there but had gone to the palace known as the 'Kopa Bhavan' where ladies of the royal household would go to give hint to the king that something was annoying them, and that they expected the king to redress their grievance. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 24 along with Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it.]

दलकि उठेउ सुनि हृदउ कठोरू । जनु छुड़ गयउ पाक बरतोरू ॥ ४ ॥
ऐसिउ पीर बिहसि तेहिं गोई । चोर नारि जिमि प्रगटि न रोई ॥ ५ ॥

dalaki uṭhē'u suni hr̥da'u kaṭhōrū. janu chu'i gaya'u pāka baratōrū. 4.
aisi'u pīra bihasi tēhiṁ gō'ī. cōra nāri jimi pragaṭi na rō'ī. 5.

No sooner she heard from Dasrath about Lord Ram's anointment but her stony heart flared up ferociously, making her wince as if a festering sore caused by a pulled out hair of the body (pāka baratōrū) was poked by someone unwarily (janu chu'i gaya'u), causing intense pain to her. (4)

But she showed no apparent external sign of intense agitation within her, keeping it concealed under the mask of a fake smile, just like a female thief (cōra nāri) who does not weep openly at being caught in the midst of her mischief (jimi pragaṭi na rō'ī), maintaining an exterior of calm and nonchalance as if she was innocent and that nothing serious had happened that would adversely affect her. (5)

[Note—In verse no. 4 it is said that when king Dasrath told her about Lord Ram's anointment on the throne the next day, she flared up in anger and winced just like a person would if someone pricks his sore wound to cause a sudden, intense wave of pain, which would cause the person suffering from the wound cry out in pain.

The next verse no. 5 tells us that she was so cunning that she hid her anger, for instead of showing an immediate outburst of annoyance at the news of Lord Ram's anointment by yelling at her husband, or even pulling at her hairs and beating her chest or stomping on the ground, the wily Kaikeyi suppressed her repugnance by maintaining an exterior of calm with a wry smile as if she was not offended by this news.

What was the reason for her maintaining an artificial calm? Well, she did not wish to alarm her husband prematurely, that she was upset by the news of Lord Ram's anointment to the throne, before she could make him promise under oath that he would surely redeem the two pending boons that he had granted her long ago. She

suspected that if the king would get a hint that the news of Lord Ram's anointment has annoyed his wife, there were more than fair chances that he would become extra cautious and suspicious of her intentions at the time when she would ask him to redeem the two pending boons as she had planned, and then, in all probabilities, he would refuse to comply to her requests blindly before being acquainted with what she actually wanted. If that happened, everything would come to a naught.]

लखहिं न भूप कपट चतुराई । कोटि कुटिल मनि गुरू पढ़ाई ॥ ६ ॥
जद्यपि नीति निपुन नरनाहू । नारिचरित जलनिधि अवगाहू ॥ ७ ॥
कपट सनेहु बड़ाइ बहोरी । बोली बिहसि नयन मुहु मोरी ॥ ८ ॥

lakhahim na bhūpa kapaṭa caturā'ī. kōṭi kuṭila mani gurū paṛhā'ī. 6.
jadyapi nīti nipuna naranāhū. nāricarita jalanidhi avagāhū. 7.
kapaṭa sanēhu baṛhā'i bahōrī. bōlī bihasi nayana muhu mōrī. 8.

The innocent king (Dasrath) could not see through her crookedness and deceit, for she was a well-tutored disciple of an expert guru (teacher; here meaning Mantara) who epitomized wickedness and evil thoughts of the highest degree¹. (6)

Verily, though it is true that the king was very wise and intelligent, but he was a straightforward and upright man who could not fathom the depth of the ocean symbolized by the crookedness and the wicked nature of a wily and selfish woman. (7)

Meanwhile, Kaikeyi pretended to be affable by showing fake affection for the king. She appeared to be bashful by turning her face sideways a little, and sporting a smile (to make the unsuspecting king think that she being amorous and trying to arouse his passions)². (8)

[Note—¹The king was of a simple heart; he had no ill-intentions in him. Everything he was doing was clear, above board, and according to established norms. So there was no reason why he would suspect that his own wife was planning to pull the carpet from under his feet and upturn the apple cart for no rhyme or reason, and specially in a matter—of Lord Ram's anointment to the throne—that no one could ever imagine, even in one's wildest of dreams, would offend her. It was well known that there was complete harmony and goodwill amongst the members of the royal family; Lord Ram was loved by one and all—even Kaikeyi herself has acknowledged it (apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 15).

But unfortunately, the effect of bad company, evil advice, and trusting a crooked and wicked companion blindly, without applying her own discretion and judgment, coupled by the evil fiat of fate and an imaginary fear of a doomed future had corrupted Kaikeyi's mind and wisdom so much that the vile scheme she devised to trap the king firmly and subjugate him defied comprehension, so much so that they escaped being perceived by king Dasrath's innocent heart and upright mind.

²The behaviour displayed by Kaikeyi resembles that of a woman in heat, a lustful woman who would adopt provocative postures and make enticing gestures to indicate

to her lover that she wants her sensual desires gratified. The poor king had no idea that the thunderbolt was about to strike him at the moment of climax.]

दो०. मागु मागु पै कहहु पिय कबहुँ न देहु न लेहु ।
देन कहेहु बरदान दुइ तेउ पावत संदेहु ॥ २७ ॥

dōhā.

māgu māgu pai kahahu piya kabahum' na dēhu na lēhu.
dēna kahēhu baradāna du'i tē'u pāvata sandēhu. 27.

[Kaikeyi finally bared her fangs by telling the king—]

‘Oh my dear (piya)’, said Kaikeyi to king Dasrath, ‘You always repeat to me that I can ask for anything I want, but it is merely talk, for the fact is that you have never fulfilled your words.

Come to think of it, there are two long-standing boons that are still pending to be redeemed, and I doubt that they would ever be fulfilled.’¹ (Doha no. 27)

[Note—¹The story of how Kaikeyi got the two promises from king Dasrath, that she can ask for anything she wished and it shall be fulfilled, has already been narrated earlier as a note to verse no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 22.

Now she invokes them and taunts the king that if he is honest and truthful, then why does he not actually fulfill the two pending boons that are long overdue, but merely keeps on making a pretense of being ready to fulfill Kaikeyi’s wishes while actually never meaning to do it.

This is in response to the king’s statement that Kaikeyi could ask for anything she wishes a little earlier in Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 26 herein above.

Kaikeyi was preparing the trap to ensnare Dasrath. Earlier, Manthara had told her not to be in haste in asking the king to redeem the two promises that were still pending with him, but maneuver things in such a way that the king should first make an oath in the name of his eldest son Lord Ram before she asks him to fulfill the two promises given to her. Once the king is fully bound by this oath, which he would durst not break for the fear of causing harm to Lord Ram whom he loves so much, Kaikeyi should go ahead and ask him what the wicked Manthara had tutored her to ask. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 22.}

And indeed it happened as planned by Kaikeyi—for we shall soon read herein below that the king, who did not suspect any foul play, did make such an oath in the name of Lord Ram. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 28.}]

चौ०. जानेउँ मरमु राउ हँसि कहई । तुम्हहि कोहाब परम प्रिय अहई ॥ १ ॥
थाती राखि न मागिहु काऊ । बिसरि गयउ मोहि भोर सुभाऊ ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

jānē'um̐ maramu rā'u ham̐si kaha'ī. tumhahi kōhāba parama priya aha'ī. 1.
thātī rākhi na māgihu kā'ū. bisari gaya'u mōhi bhōra subhā'ū. 2.

The unwary and unsuspecting king smiled and replied: 'Well, now I understand thine intentions and the mystery of thy behaviour. Thou art fond of throwing tantrums every now and then for trifles to show that thou art uneasy about them. (1)

Indeed it is true that there are two boons pending with me, but it is thine own fault for thy havest never asked me to redeem them, and I on my part hadst all but forgotten about them as I'm quite forgetful. [So therefore, what's the big deal about it; what's the big issue? Ask, and it shall be given thee.] (2)

झूठेहूँ हमहि दोषु जनि देहू । दुइ कै चारि मागि मकु लेहू ॥ ३ ॥
रघुकुल रीति सदा चलि आई । प्रान जाहुँ बरु बचनु न जाई ॥ ४ ॥

jhūṭhēhum̐ hamahi dōṣu jani dēhū. du'i kai cāri māgi maku lēhū. 3.
raghukula rīti sadā cali ā'ī. prāna jāhum̐ baru bacanu na jā'ī. 4.

'Why doth thou blame me unnecessarily for not fulfilling the two pending boons¹, because I am forgetful²? Come, what of two boons only, thy canst ask for four boons instead of the two that are due. (3)

Verily indeed, it is a well established tradition in our family, that has descended from the ancient illustrious king Raghu, that one must honour one's words even if it is at the cost of one's life.

[To wit, it is an honourable tradition in our ancient family that one must always keep his words, no matter what consequences result from it, for even if one has to meet death in order to fulfill words of honour, it is worth it.] (4)

[Note—¹King Dasrath refers to Kaikeyi's statement that he merely makes promises but never bothers to fulfill them—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 27.

²Refer to Chaupai line no. 2 herein above.]

नहिं असत्य सम पातक पुंजा । गिरि सम होहिं कि कोटिक गुंजा ॥ ५ ॥
सत्यमूल सब सुकृत सुहाए । बेद पुरान बिदित मनु गाए ॥ ६ ॥

nahim asatya sama pātaka puñjā. giri sama hōhim ki kōṭika guñjā. 5.
satyamūla saba sukr̥ta suhā'ē. bēda purāna bidita manu gā'ē. 6.

Even a large hoard of sins is inferior to a single instance of lie. [To wit, a single lie is a grave sin which outweighs a large number of other forms of sins.]

Say, can any numbers of seeds of a Gunja plant (botanical name 'Abrus presotorius', a leguminous plant from whose root liquorice is obtained) ever be as large as a great mountain? [To wit, no matter how many small seeds of this plant are

heaped together, but they can never become as huge as to be comparable to a mountain.]¹ (5)

The Vedas, the Purans (i.e. ancient scriptures) and sage Manu (the ancient philosopher who has written the treatise on what is good and what is bad conduct for a person) have unequivocally asserted that there is nothing more auspicious and noble than truthfulness, for this virtue is at the root of everything that is worthy of praise and honour². (6)

[Note—¹The idea is that telling a lie is equivalent to not keeping one's words, and it is such a grave sin that all other sins put together would fall short of the evil consequences of a single instance of telling a lie or not fulfilling a word of honour.

It is like the case of trying to compare a mountain with a heap of seeds of small size; millions of such seeds heaped together would not be large or high enough to become an actual mountain. Here, telling a lie or not keeping one's words is the 'mountain', and all other types of sins are inconsequential in its comparison like the seeds of the Gunja plant which are very small in size.

²These two verses are great guides for us. Simply put, they say that lying is a grave sin, and being truthful is the best virtue a person can possess.]

तेहि पर राम सपथ करि आई । सुकृत सनेह अवधि रघुराई ॥ ७ ॥
बात दृढ़ाई कुमति हँसि बोली । कुमत कुबिहग कुलह जनु खोली ॥ ८ ॥

tēhi para rāma sapatha kari āī. sukr̥ta sanēha avadhi raghurāī. 7.
bāta dṛṛhā'i kumati haṁṣi bōlī. kumata kubihaga kulaha janu khōlī. 8.

Besides the above inviolable rule honoured from time immemorial by all the members of our illustrious family, which we hold sacrosanct, I add another rider to it to convince thee that I mean business, and would never go back on my words, in the form of an oath that I take in the name of (my eldest and beloved son) Lord Ram¹, who indeed is an epitome of the grand virtues of goodness and righteousness, as well as having affection for all, for he is a personified form of amiability and affability and all good virtues². (7)

Having determined that the king was by now bound to his words (and there was no chance that he would rescind on them), the wicked Kaikeyi, whose mind was crooked and corrupted, smiled wryly as if she was about to open the cover of the wild plot laid out by her to trap her husband to force him do her bidding even as a wild hawk opens its eyes wide just before swooping down on its prey³. (8)

[Note—¹Dasrath had gone overboard in his zeal to somehow please his agitated wife and calm her down, making him fall unwittingly into the very trap that Kaikeyi had laid for him on the advice of her instigator Manthara—by taking an oath in the name of Lord Ram. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 22 (Manthara's advice); and (ii) Doha no. 27 (Kaikeyi showing her doubts that the king might not honour his words).}

Well, for one, Dasrath should not have trusted Kaikeyi so blindly when he knew about her whimsical nature, and secondly, there was no need for him to make another oath once he has already stressed that it was an inviolable and sacrosanct rule of his illustrious family that if a promise has been made, it must be honoured even at the cost of one's life—apropos: Chaupai line nos.4-67 that precede Doha no. 28 herein above. Say, what was then the need to invoke the name of Lord Ram and put him at risk for being at the receiving end of the punishment for breaking some vow for which the Lord was not at all responsible?

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 193; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precedes Doha no. 197; (iii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 310; (b) Ayodhya Kand, (iv) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 93; (v) Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precede Doha no. 122.

³In this metaphor, Kaikeyi is the wild hawk, Dasrath is the unsuspecting prey, and the way Kaikeyi looked wildly at her husband from the corners of her cocked-up eyes she resembled the hawk who focuses its view on the prey on which it was about to swoop down mercilessly.]

दो०. भूप मनोरथ सुभग बनु सुख सुबिहंग समाजु ।
भिल्लिनि जिमि छाड़न चहति बचनु भयंकरु बाजु ॥ २८ ॥
dōhā.

bhūpa manōratha subhaga banu sukha subihaṅga samāju.
bhillini jimi chāṛana cahati bacanu bhayaṅkaru bāju. 28.

Here, the pleasant desire of king Dasrath to install his eldest son Lord Ram on the throne of Ayodhya and enjoy the rest of his life in peace, is like a beautiful garden; the many pictures of joy and rejoicing as well as of the days of happiness and celebrations that he had been imagining in his mind, were like the countless beautiful birds hopping around and chirping merrily in the garden; and Kaikeyi poised to spoil everything by unveiling her atrocious demands, was like a hunter-women eyeing the birds and getting ready to launch her well-trained hawk to go in the garden, pounce upon one of the birds, kill it, and fetch it to her for meat. (Doha no. 28)

[Note—One indeed feels sorry and would have empathy for Dasrath. He was a noble, righteous and upright king; he followed rules of conduct and was always ready to help the gods. Even in his desire to appoint Lord Ram on the throne, he was following tradition and well-established rules of royal inheritance. He loved all his sons and queens equally. He treated his subjects like a head of an extended family#1. The one shortcoming in his character, though, was his weakness towards the temptations of lust and passion, called Kaam#2.

He was getting old#3, and he wanted rest and peace during the twilight days of his life like any other person would obviously want. In this background, one can imagine what tremendous injustice was done to him and the pain inflicted on his innocent heart by none else but his own wife Kaikeyi, that too in the name of her son Bharat, both of whom he loved so much, and for reasons completely false and cooked-up by an evil maidservant.

{#1Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 188 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 294; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 310; (b) Ayodhya Kand, (iv) Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 15; (v) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 173—to Chaupai line nos. 1 that precedes Doha no. 174; (vi) Doha no. 31 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it, and Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it.

#2Refer: Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 25.

#3Refer: Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 2; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 2-5 that precede Doha no. 4.}]

[PAUSE 13 FOR A THIRTY-DAY RECITATION]

चौ०. सुनुहु प्रानप्रिय भावत जी का । देहु एक बर भरतहि टीका ॥ १ ॥

मागउँ दूसर बर कर जोरी । पुरवहु नाथ मनोरथ मोरी ॥ २ ॥

तापस बेष बिसेषि उदासी । चौदह बरिस रामु बनबासी ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

sunahu prānapriya bhāvata jī kā. dēhu ēka bara bharatahi ṭīkā. 1.
māga'um' dūsara bara kara jōrī. puravahu nātha manōratha mōrī. 2.
tāpasa bēṣa bisēṣi udāsī. caudaha barisa rāmu banabāsī. 3.

Kaikeyi finally disclosed to the king her wishes by asking him to fulfill his words by granting her the following two boons: ‘Oh my dearest (prānapriya)! Now, listen to the two wishes that I hold dear to my heart (and which you have promised to fulfill).

My first wish is that my son Bharat should be anointed to the throne (as the Prince-Regent). (1)

And now, oh my Lord (nātha), while asking for the second wish to be fulfilled, I join my palms in a prayerful mode with a request that it should not be refused to me. (2)

My second wish is this: that Ram must be sent to the forest for fourteen years to live like a reclusive hermit, donning a habit suitable to such a way of life in the forest.’ (3)

[Note—Kaikeyi has followed the line as tutored by Manthara: she first asks for Bharat’s anointment, and then for Lord Ram going to the forest, after extracting an inviolable oath from Dasrath. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precedes Doha no. 22.

Why was this sequence, of first asking for Bharat to be anointed on the throne, and then seeking Lord Ram’s banishment to the forest, planned? Kaikeyi’s advisor Manthara had carefully pondered over the matter and concluded that the most important thing to be done was to put Bharat on the throne so that the reins of the kingdom devolve into his hands, giving him royal powers and an authority to take decisions as the ruler of the kingdom. Once empowered, his mother Kaikeyi would be at once, and automatically, elevated to the stature of a senior queen by the virtue of her being the mother of the ruling monarch who sits on the throne. This accomplished, then even if the king refuses to accept the second demand of sending Lord Ram away

to the forest, it would not matter much as he would not be able to do any harm to Bharat or his mother Kaikeyi because the power and authority of the kingdom would not be in his hands any longer once Bharat ascends the throne.

It was well planned indeed. But what was the reason that Manthara wanted to send Lord Ram far away to the forest and live like a reclusive hermit? Well, she was apprehensive that if the Lord lived in Ayodhya, he would sooner or later plan a coup against Bharat, with the army mutinying too, and this apprehension of hers had substance in it as every single citizen of the place wanted to have Lord Ram as their ruler, and so they would lend him full support against Bharat should he desire to rise in revolt. So prudence required that Bharat's rival and competitor should be packed off as far away as was possible.

By demanding that Lord Ram be sent to live like a hermit and a recluse, it was ensured that he would be disarmed and rendered harmless because he would be obliged to follow the conduct and vows suited to a hermit, and hermits don't wage bloody wars, or take part in an uprising or rebellion against a ruling monarch of any kingdom. The time of fourteen years would be sufficient for Bharat to strengthen his grip on the reins of the kingdom, and any rudimentary undercurrent of revolt against his reign would be crushed by him during this time. Further, Bharat would have sufficient time to reinforce his position and gain support of the citizens by his good conduct and governance, so that even if Lord Ram survives the harsh life of a forest-dweller and comes back to Ayodhya after fourteen long years, the chances of the people supporting him against Bharat and rising in revolt or insurrection would be very-very remote, as compared to the present time when emotions were intensely in favour of Lord Ram. {This is in accordance to Valmiki's Ramayana, Ayodhya Kand, Sarga 9, verse nos. 21-35.}

Another reason why Kaikeyi wanted Lord Ram to live like a reclusive hermit deep in the forest, one who has taken a vow of not visiting any inhabited area or a householder, was her fear that otherwise the Lord would come back in the garb of a wondering mendicant who goes from village to village or home to home seeking alms, which eventuality could pose the danger of his secretly garnering support and clandestinely raising an army of supporters within the extended realms of the kingdom to suddenly pounce upon Bharat and imprison him, or incite a revolt or an insurrection against him from within the kingdom to dethrone him, and then come in victorious from the place of his exile to reclaim the throne for himself.

The other reason why 'fourteen years' was necessary for Lord Ram to go and live in the forest is this: The demon king Ravana's life had as many years left before he was destined to die. So therefore, it was necessary for Lord Ram to wait for this period so that the right time comes when the demon king could be eliminated. Remember: Neither Manthara nor Kaikeyi was acting out of their own free will; they were now under the influence of goddess Saraswati who had been assigned the task by the gods to devise a method whereby Lord Ram could go to the forest to eliminate the demons and end their tyranny. It was Saraswati who decided to take the help of Manthara and Kaikeyi to give effect to this scheme by deluding and corrupting their minds. Since Saraswati knew that fourteen more years were needed before Ravana could be slayed, she tweaked Kaikeyi's mind and induced her to ask for Lord Ram living in the forest for this period. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 11—to Doha no. 12.}]

सुनि मृदु बचन भूप हियँ सोकू । ससि कर छुअत बिकल जिमि कोकू ॥ ४ ॥

गयउ सहमि नहिं कछु कहि आवा । जनु सचान बन झपटेउ लावा ॥ ५ ॥
बिबरन भयउ निपट नरपालू । दामिनि हनेउ मनहुँ तरु तालू ॥ ६ ॥

sunī mṛḍu bacana bhūpa hiyaṁ sōkū. sasi kara chu'ata bikala jimi kōkū. 4.
gaya'u sahama nahim kachu kahi āvā. janu sacāna bana jhapaṭē'u lāvā. 5.
bibarana bhaya'u nipaṭa narapālū. dāmini hanē'u manahum taru tālū. 6.

These sweetly spoken gentle words of Kaikeyi, which concealed inside them the harshness of the demands she made, created immense agony, distress and grief in the heart of the distraught king (Dasrath) in the same way as the soothing light of the moon creates intense grief and agony in the heart of the bird known as 'Koku' (or 'Chakawa'; the Ruddy Goose)¹. (4)

The king was extremely shocked with disbelief; he was so distraught and incredulous that he became dumbfounded, unable to speak a word in reply. His condition was similar to an unsuspecting partridge who lives a peaceful life in a garden or a forest when it is caught unawares by a hawk who suddenly swoops down on it to catch hold of it to kill². (5)

King Dasrath's face became deathly pale as if thunderbolt had stricken a palm tree, making it dried and shriveled up in a fraction of a moment³. (6)

[Note—¹The male Koku or Chakor bird belongs to the species of birds similar to the swan. Its body is multi-coloured. It is said that during the night the male normally separates from its female counterpart, but during the night of the full moon, the moonlight arouses the male's passions who begins to long for its partner, which is not near it. This separation from its female counterpart creates intense heart-burn in the male bird, making it exceedingly distraught and remorseful in spite of the fact that the full moon's light is usually very cool and soothing for the agitated nerves. To wit, instead of giving peace to the heart of the male Koku bird, the moonlight causes heart-burn in it.

In a similar way, the sweetly spoken words of Kaikeyi caused king Dasrath to wince in shock and dismay. She had spoken courteously and in a gentle manner, not rudely, but the message the words conveyed were so extremely harsh that Dasrath felt pangs of grief gripping his heart in a vice.

²In this metaphor, the king, who did not suspect that anything was wrong when he had tried to calm down his wife by promising her to redeem the pending boons, is like the poor partridge, while Kaikeyi is likened to the merciless hawk as she suddenly launched her vicious attack on the king by asking him to give the two boons that stunned him and shattered all his hopes.

³Here, Kaikeyi's demands are like the strike of the thunderbolt as they came in unexpectedly, suddenly and fiercely to strike at Dasrath, while the king himself is compared to the palm tree that is hit by a bolt of lightning, as he immediately became dumbstruck and immobile, unable to speak a word and losing the colour of his face which became deathly pale.]

माथें हाथ मूदि दोउ लोचन । तनु धरि सोचु लाग जनु सोचन ॥ ७ ॥
 मोर मनोरथु सुरतरु फूला । फरत करिनि जिमि हतेउ समूला ॥ ८ ॥
 अवध उजारि कीन्हि कैकेई । दीन्हिसि अचल बिपति कै नेई ॥ ९ ॥

māthēm hātha mūdi dō'u lōcana. tanu dhari sōcu lāga janu sōcana. 7.
 mōra manōrathu surataru phulā. pharata karini jimi hatē'u samulā. 8.
 avadha ujāri kīnhi kaikē'īm. dīnhisi acala bipati kai nē'īm. 9.

The king (was so shocked and crestfallen that he) mourned and lamented, clasping his head in the palms of his hands and closing both his eyes as he brooded gravely and became remorseful, giving the impression that he was a personified form of dismay, grief and remorse¹. (7)

Dasrath brooded and thought gloomily to himself: 'My auspicious desires and good intentions were like the evergreen tree called 'Kalp Taru' that had flowered and was about to bear its sweet fruits when suddenly it was uprooted and trampled upon by a wild she elephant (in the form of Kaikeyi and her asking for the two harsh boons). (8)

Alack; Alas! Kaikeyi has cast an unprecedented havoc on Ayodhya; she would make it desolate and has laid a firm foundation for its doom². ' (9)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 34—to Chaupai line nos. 2 that precedes Doha no. 35; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 37.

²King Dasrath's guess was right as we shall soon find out, for when it the people were informed of what had happened, a thick pall of gloom and grief had descended upon the city. All the citizens were dazed; all their joys vanished. Later on, when Lord Ram actually went to the forest, the citizens ran after him, wailing and grieving, determined as they were that they would not live in the city without Lord Ram. But the Lord could not allow this to happen as it was not practical for the whole city to go with him to the forest; so the Lord silently left them behind in the darkness of the night to go onwards on his journey. Discovering that the Lord had gone the next morning, the dismayed citizens were left with no choice but to return home, and pass their days in grief, with the remembrance of the Lord as the only plank for survival, with the hope that at the end of fourteen years they would see their beloved Lord once again. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 46—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 51; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 81; (iii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 84—to Doha no. 86; (iv) Chaupai line no. that precedes Doha no. 92.}]

दो०. कवनें अवसर का भयउ गयउँ नारि बिस्वास ।

जोग सिद्धि फल समय जिमि जतिहि अबिद्या नास ॥ २९ ॥

dōhā.

kavanēṁ avasara kā bhaya'u gaya'um' nāri bisvāsa.
jōga sid'dhi phala samaya jimi jatihi abidyā nāsa. 29.

King Dasrath was overcome with intense remorse as he lamented that he had trusted a woman as wicked as Kaikeyi. He regretted and said to himself: 'What a woeful moment is this that an unexpected calamity has befallen me at a time when there was not the remotest of chances of such a thing ever happening. Indeed, I have lost all trust in a woman (albeit it is too late for it to be of any good now)¹.

It is like the unfortunate case of a Yogi (an ascetic; 'jati') who is in the final stages of tasting the fruit of success in his spiritual pursuit of self-realisation (jōga sid'dhi phala samaya) when suddenly he goes astray and gets distracted from his chosen path due to delusions and worldly temptations that prove to be his undoing (jimi --- abidyā nāsa). (Doha no. 29)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 27; (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 36.

Dasrath lamented gravely that he had committed a grave error of judgment by reposing his trust on a woman whom he had known by experience to be wicked, selfish, adept at throwing tantrums, fickle minded, and given to whimsical behaviour. But now it was too late to make amends; he has invoked the reputation of his illustrious family's good name and tradition of being truthful to one's words, and he has compounded his follies by unnecessarily pulling in Lord Ram by taking an oath in his name. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precede Doha no. 28.}

The distraught king was beyond redemption as he lamented and grieved at his error of citing his family's name and add an oath to it in the name of Lord Ram to calm down a woman; what was the need of this? Should he not have been more careful and prudent while dealing with a woman whose wily character and deceitful nature was no secret from him? Couldn't he just have told Kaikeyi to stop the drama and come to her senses, for it was not the time for theatrics? Could he not have told her that though she was free to request him to fulfill her wishes, but that promise could not be an open-ended one which might jeopardize the interests of the kingdom and put it in peril? After all, a woman's whims cannot be allowed to interfere with and rule over matters of state. The poor king lamented and regretted that he made a slip here; but it was such a slip that there seemed to be no chance of recovery from it.

Dasrath became pensive; he took a deep breath and decided that he must now try to explore all the possibilities so that some way could be found out to extricate himself from the quagmire he has landed himself into. We shall read now that he would try his best to mollify Kaikeyi by proposing a compromise formula, that he would appoint Bharat to the throne for sure, but there was no sense in sending Lord Ram to the forest; that she must calm down as he had no ulterior motives against her or her son Bharat while deciding to make Lord Ram as the Prince-regent, as he was merely following established traditions of royal inheritance; that there was no conspiracy against her or her son; that she ought to be warned that if she pushes on with her stubbornness then widowhood stares her in the face, for her husband would die in the wake of this disaster.

But for the unfortunate king, however, nothing worked.]

चौ०. एहि बिधि राउ मनहिं मन झाँखा । देखि कुभाँति कुमति मन माखा ॥ १ ॥
 भरतु कि राउर पूत न होही । आनेहु मोल बेसाहि कि मोही ॥ २ ॥
 जो सुनि सरु अस लाग तुम्हारे । काहे न बोलहु बचनु सँभारे ॥ ३ ॥
 caupāī.

ēhi bidhi rā'u manahim mana jhāmkhā. dēkhi kubhāmṭi kumati mana mākhā.
 1.
 bharatu ki rā'ura pūta na hōnhī. ānēhu mōla bēsāhi ki mōhī. 2.
 jō suni saru asa lāga tumhārēm. kāhē na bōlahu bacanu sambhārēm. 3.

In the aforesaid manner, king Dasrath lamented, grieved and regretted within himself.
 When Kaikeyi observed that the king was quiet and did not immediately ratify or approve of her demands, she became suspicious (that he might change his mind and rescind on his words). This possibility infuriated her; it stoked her anger and made her vehement. (1)

She spoke angrily and rebuked the king most sternly, taunting him and adding salt to his wounds by saying: 'Is Bharat not the king's son, or has he brought her by purchasing her as a slave, --- (2)

---That when thou heard that I wish Bharat to be anointed to the throne, it was as if an arrow has pierced thine heart (obviously because it is not acceptable to thee, and thou havest become terribly upset at this prospect)?

Well, if it is to be that way, then why didst thou so confidently make so many vows so boldly, without thinking before speaking? (3)

देहु उतरु अनु करहु कि नाही । सत्यसंध तुम्ह रघुकुल माहीं ॥ ४ ॥
 देन कहेहु अब जनि बरु देहु । तजहु सत्य जग अपजसु लेहु ॥ ५ ॥
 सत्य सराहि कहेहु बरु देना । जानेहु लेइहि मागि चबेना ॥ ६ ॥

dēhu utaru anu karahu ki nāhīm. satyasandha tumha raghukula māhīm. 4.
 dēna kahēhu aba jani baru dēhū. tajahu satya jaga apajasu lēhū. 5.
 satya sarāhi kahēhu baru dēnā. jānēhu lē'ihi māgi cabēnā. 6.

Come tell me: wilt thou, or wilt thou not, fulfill thy own words of honour? Well, remember: thou hast thy self boasted that thou are true to thine words, and that thou are a member of the illustrious family of king Raghu that is renowned to honour words of honour given to others.

[Tell me, doth thou wish to bring disrepute to thy family and its good name by refusing what thy promised me, by rescinding on thine own words?]¹ (4)

Thou hadest promised to grant me two boons and now if thou refuse it by rescinding on thine own words, come to think of it, wouldst it not mean being untruthful, wouldst it not mean abandoning the path of truth. Tell me, art thou ready to break thine words and invite a huge shame and ignominy on thy self? (5)

Verily, thou had lauded so much and boasted of the virtues of being truthful to one's words, so didst thou expect that I wilt ask thee for some dry grains (when thou hadest asked me so confidently to say what I wished to be done)?

[To wit, did thou thinkest me to be a starving pauper who wouldst seek petty alms or some dry seeds to feed my empty stomach? Why, how come all praises of good virtues of being truthful to one's words of honour given to someone, that thou so loudly spoke of, havest suddenly vanished into thin air, that thou havest fallen silent as if thine tongue has suffered from paralysis when the time came to stand by the morals thou hadest so steadfastly defended and advocated repeatedly?] (6)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precedes Doha no. 26; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precedes Doha no. 28.]

सिबि दधीचि बलि जो कछु भाषा । तनु धनु तजेउ बचन पनु राखा ॥ ७ ॥
अति कटु बचन कहति कैकेई । मानहुँ लोन जरे पर देई ॥ ८ ॥

sibi dadhīci bali jō kachu bhāṣā. tanu dhanu tajē'u bacana panu rākhā. 7.
ati kaṭu bacana kahati kaikēī. mānahuṁ lōna jarē para dēī. 8.

Remember the tradition of upholding truthfulness as established by ancient honourable people such as¹ sage-king Shibi² and Dadhichi³, as well as king Bali⁴, who had sacrificed their lives and wealth, nay everything they had, in order to keep their words of honour.' (7)

Kaikeyi continued with her barrage of sarcastic taunts and pungent words that seemed to rub salt on the already painful wound of burn from which the poor king Dasrath was suffering. (8)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 48; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 95.

²Sage-king Shibi (or Sibi): His story is narrated in Mahabharat, Vanparva, Chapter 197, by sage Markendey to king Yudhisthir as follows: Shibi was a king of the Soma race, and the son of king Ushinara. He was very generous, judicious, magnanimous, and a pious soul. To test his virtues, the community of gods sent Indra and the Fire God; Indra transformed himself as a hawk and Fire God as a pigeon. Once, when king Shibi was sitting on his throne, the pigeon came flying in with a great fright and fell down on his lap, while the hawk came rushing in hot pursuit. The pigeon told the king that the hawk wants to kill it, and that he (the pigeon) has come to the king seeking protection; it also told him that in reality it was not a bird but an ascetic who practices self-restraint in all aspects of life. On the other hand, the hawk demanded that the king hand the pigeon over to him as it was its prey and food, and the king was obliged not to deprive the hawk of its natural food. The king was flabbergasted when he heard the two birds speak in a human voice, and presenting such a dilemma to him—for it was a grave sin not to protect a harmless creature who has surrendered himself, such as the pigeon in this case, while at the same time it was an equal sin to disallow someone from eating his natural food, as was the case of the hawk here. The king told the hawk that he was ready to offer his own flesh to it instead of the meat of the pigeon, and

added that as a consequence if he had to die, he was ready for it. Or else, the hawk could ask for meat of some other animal, or give some other alternative if he so wished, and the king promised him that he was ready to do it.

The hawk told the king that he should cut-off the flesh of his right thigh with his own hands so that it weighs as much as the pigeon, and give it to the hawk to eat. At this, the king ordered that a weighing scale be brought in, and he placed the pigeon on one of its sides and started chopping off his own flesh to put on the other side of the scale so that the balance became equal. But it so happened that the pigeon continued to weigh more than the pieces of flesh of his body that the king went on adding on the opposite side of scale. At last, when the scale continued to tip towards the pigeon, the king decided to offer his entire body to strike a balance.

At this point, the hawk disappeared from sight. The astonished king asked the pigeon who the hawk was. The pigeon then disclosed the truth about who he and the hawk were. Then he blessed the king that the flesh which he had cut off would be restored, with the additional boon that henceforth all the kings of his race would have strong, well-built and muscular thighs. Besides this, a great son named Kapotroma would be born to the king from the cavity that had formed when he cut off the flesh of his thighs.

According to another story, once king Shibi decided to do 100 fire sacrifices. When he had completed 99 sacrifices, Indra, the king of gods, wanted to test him. So he took along the Fire God; they assumed the form of a hawk and a pigeon respectively. The rest of the story is as narrated herein above, with a slight variation as to its end. Here it is said that when the flesh of king Shibi's body could not weigh equal to the weight of the pigeon, the king lifted his sword to cut his own head as compensation. Just at that moment, Indra and Fire God revealed themselves, prevented the king from cutting off his head, restored the fresh of his body, and blessed the king.

A third story is this: In order to test king Shibi's adherence to noble virtues, once Brahma, the creator, assumed the form of a Brahmin and went to Shibi's place, saying that he was hungry and wanted to eat a meat dish especially prepared for him with the fresh flesh of the king's own son. The king obeyed, but preparation of this dish took some time, and when it was ready and the king took it to the place where he expected that the guest would be waiting, he discovered that the latter had become angry because of late in service, and in a fit of rage had gone to burn the king's city. The king remained unmoved, and he went to the place where the angry Brahmin-guest was present. The king offered the meat dish to him and asked for forgiveness for being late, at which the Brahmin showed a pretence of anger and asked the king to eat the dish himself. Obeying the command, no sooner the king began to eat the dish prepared from the flesh of his own son but the Brahmin held his hand and revealed his true identity, as being Brahma, the creator. Then, Brahma blessed the king, and revived his dead son immediately; Brahma told him that he just wanted to test Shibi's vow that he would always fulfill the desire of anyone who approached him for anything. In this case, the demand was terrible—that the king should kill his own son and prepare a meat dish using the son's flesh. This story is narrated in Mahabharat, Vanparva, Chapter 199.

³Sage-king Dadhichi—Dadhichi was an ancient sage who willingly sacrificed his life to help the Gods win over the Demons. He was the son of sage Atharvan, the progenitor of the Atharva Veda and the first sage who initiated the tradition of Fire worship, and his wife Shanti. According to another version, he is said to be the son of

Prajapati Bhrigu who had used the essence of the whole world to mould his son Dadhichi from them so that this son had all the best in the world. He was of a colossal form like that of a mountain.

The well known sage Pippalaad was his son. Dadhichi is a synonym for the highest ideals of self-sacrifice for the general good.

Indra was always afraid and jealous of him. So once he sent an Apsara (celestial nymph) of exceptional beauty to defile his Tapa (penance and austerity) and Brahmacharya vows of celibacy). At that time, Dadhichi was taking a bath in the river Saraswati, and inspite of being a celebrated sage he could not exercise self-control and ejaculated in the water when he saw the Apsara bathing naked in the river. His sperms fell in the water, and the river Saraswati accepted them as a blessing. From his sperms was born sage Saraswat, so named because he was born in river Saraswati. This later sage is known to have taught the Vedas to the Brahmins during the great famine lasting twelve years.

It so happened that during the Sata-yug, the first of the 4-era Hindu celestial cycle of creation and destruction, a race of demons was born by the name of Kaalkeya. They made Vrittaasur their king. These demons conquered the heaven and exiled the Gods. The Gods prayed to Brahma, the old patriarch of creation and the senior-most God, seeking help. Brahma advised them that they should approach Dadhichi who had formidably strong bones, and request him to give them his bones from which they should mould an invincible weapon that would kill Vrittaasur.

It so happened that sometime in the past, the Gods had deposited all their weapons with him for safe keeping, promising to return at some fixed time. When they failed to show up, and upon observing that the weapons had begun to rust, Dadhichi dissolved them in water and drank the solution. The ingredients of the weapons got deposited in his bones, especially the back bone. Thus, his bones became extremely strong.

So, when the Gods came asking for their weapons, the sage told them what he had done, whereupon the Gods requested him to give them his backbone from which an invincible weapon can be crafted by which their formidable enemy, the demon king Vrittaasur could be slayed. Dadhichi conceded and gave them his backbone from which the weapon-smith of the Gods, named Vishwakarma, crafted Indra's invincible weapon called the Vajra (thunder-bolt). This Vajra was used to kill Vrittaasur.

It is said that many other weapon of the Gods were made out of Dadhichi's bones, such as the Gada (mace), Chakra (a sharp, serrated circular weapon; the discus) and Danda (baton). The Gada and Chakra were taken by Vishnu, and the Danda by Yam, the God of death. This is narrated in Mahabharat, Vanparva, Canto nos. 100-101, and Shalyaparva, Canto 51.

He did not die, but used the sacred ash of the fire sacrifice to remain alive in his hermitage. This fact is established in the *Brihajjabal Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, Brahman 6, verse no. 4.

In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 95 it is stated that "king Dadhichi and Harischandra endured great suffering for the cause of upholding the principles of Dharma".

⁴King Bali—The story of king Bali appears in Srimad Bhagwat, 8/15-23. It relates to the Vaaman (dwarf mendicant) incarnation of Lord Vishnu. This is the fifth incarnation of Vishnu. Bali was a grandson of Prahalad for whom Vishnu had incarnated as Nrsingh (half men and half lion) earlier.

King Bali was very righteous and powerful; he chased away Indra, the promiscuous and lustful king of Gods, from the throne of heaven, and conquered it. He performed a thousand Ashwamedha Yagya (horse sacrifice) during the course of which he had conquered the entire world and deprived Indra, the king of Gods who ruled over the heavens, of his heavenly powers. Aditi, the mother of Gods, was peeved, and she requested her husband, sage Kashyap, to find a way out. Kashyap advised her to pray to Lord Vishnu. Aditi did severe penance for twelve days at the end of which Vishnu appeared before her and asked how he could help her. When Aditi told him the problem, Vishnu promised that he will take birth as her son in the form of a 'Vaaman' (a dwarf Brahmin) and retrieve the earth and the kingdom of heaven from Bali's dominion.

Once he heard that king Bali was performing a great fire sacrifice, something Bali used to do routinely, and during which he had declared that he will give anything asked for, again something for which he was renowned. This religious sacrifice was being conducted on the banks of river Narmada. Seizing this opportunity, Vishnu in the form of a Vaaman approached Bali who welcomed him and paid his due respects. Then Bali asked Vaaman to ask for some gift or donation as this was the traditional practice during such great religious sacrifices. Vaaman was waiting for this chance. First he made Bali repeat his vows in public, and then asked for land measuring his three steps.

Bali was dumbfounded—he wondered at the inconsequential dimension of the land covered by three tiny steps of this dwarf! Bali requested Vishnu to ask for something more, but Vishnu was adamant. Bali's priest, sage Shukracharya, knew that this dwarf was no one else but Vishnu, and so he tried to persuade Bali to abstain from making such commitment off-hand, because he will lose his entire kingdom. But Bali refused, saying that being the grandson of Prahalad, he cannot rescind on his words that he will give this Brahmin dwarf whatever he asks, even if it means sufferance.

Shukracharya was annoyed at this disobedience, but Vishnu was extremely pleased, and the Lord decided that after fulfilling the promise made to the Gods he will instantly reward Bali in ample terms, and will himself serve him! What a wonderful grace Vishnu shows.

So it happened that Vishnu, in the form of Vaaman, assumed a colossal form of cosmic proportions. The Lord measured the entire earth that Bali ruled in his first step. In the second step Vishnu measured the whole heaven. Nothing was left for the third step—so Bali offered his head! Vishnu was extremely pleased, and being the Lord of the world, he decided that since Bali has offered his own self to him like a faithful devotee, he will fully reward him. Hence, Vishnu blessed Bali that he will go down in history as the greatest donor and righteous of all times, that he will become Indra, the king of Gods, and rule over the heavens during the celestial era known as Saawarni Manvantar, that till that time he shall become the king of the nether world where demons would live, and to add icing to the cake the Lord declared that he himself will become his gatekeeper, and anybody who dared oppose him would be punished by the Lord himself!]

दो०. धरम धुरंधर धीर धरि नयन उघारे रायँ ।

सिरु धुनि लीन्ह उसास असि मारेसि मोहि कुठायँ ॥ ३० ॥

dōhā.

dharama dhurandhara dhīra dhari nayana ughārē rāyam.
siru dhuni līnhi usāsa asi mārēsi mōhi kuṭhāyam. 30.

When the king, who was exceedingly upright and an upholder of the laws of Dharma (righteousness, probity, propriety, noble conduct and thought) heard the names of such glorious persons of immaculate reputation being invoked, he sighed and slowly opened his eyes even as he beat his head remorsefully, muttering to himself that this woman has killed him with an invisible but sharp weapon. (Doha no. 30)

[Note—The king lamented that he was caught in a tight snare. First, he was naturally bound by his own words. Then, he himself had spoken about the virtues of being truthful to one's words and honour them. Further, this woman cites such glorious names as king Shibi, sage Dadhichi and king Bali to imply that would not Dasrath like to follow their path, would he allow himself to be condemned and looked upon with contempt for breaking his own promises, especially when he wishes history to remember him alongside the above named illustrious kings and sages of yore?

These examples, coupled with the threat of immense shame and infamy at having broken his vows, were like the invisible but sharp weapon that Kaikeyi used to inflict wound on her husband, forcing him to succumb and comply with her wishes.]

चौ०. आगें दीखि जरत रिस भारी । मनहुँ रोष तरवारि उघारी ॥ १ ॥

मूढि कुबुद्धि धार निठुराई । धरी कूबरीं सान बनाई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

āgēm dīkhi jarata risa bhārī. manahum' rōṣa taravāri ughārī. 1.
mūṭhi kubud'dhi dhāra niṭhurāī. dhārī kūbarīṁ sāna banāī. 2.

No sooner the weary king opened his eyes tiredly but he saw Kaikeyi standing before him burning with rage (with fiery eyes and a fierce scowl on her face) as if she personified Anger and Wrath themselves glowering at him with a drawn sword. (1)

Her malicious and crooked mind was the hilt of this symbolic sword; its edge was her lack of remorse and stubbornness; and the vile hunch-back (Manthara) had aided her in sharpening this sword and training her how to use it. (2)

[Note—A reading of these verses clearly imply that the real culprit was Kaikeyi herself, for she was by nature a selfish woman given to whimsical behaviour and anger, one who would jump to conclusions without weighing the pros and cons of any given situation, one who is given to trusting hearsay and lending her ears to malicious people without verifying the truth of what she hears, one who would mistrust her own family members and become suspicious of them, but would easily trust crooked people who twist facts and manipulate things to suit their own nefarious agendas. These chinks or faults in Kaikeyi's character made her vulnerable to being so easily maneuvered by corrupt aides, such as Manthara in our case, who would exploit the weaknesses in her character to create mischief, and then sit back to enjoy the drama that follows.

If Kaikeyi had been a wise and prudent woman, had she been judicious in her thoughts and actions, as is expected from a lady of high birth who is no less than a

‘queen’ of a mighty empire, she would have first asked her husband what the fact was, for clarifications of her doubts, instead of throwing tantrums and knocking things around like a mad person. Come to think of it: she did not give Dasrath a chance to explain things before making harsh demands, and then the way she behaved nastily with him absolutely does not behove of a woman of culture and high birth.

She was not ready to hear anything contrary to what was firmly fixed in her corrupt mind, as we shall soon see, because even though the king tried his best to explain things to her and persuade her to come to her senses and avoid being wild and mad, for surely she was courting disaster and inviting havoc for one and all, she wouldn’t listen.

It is true that the instigator was Manthara, but that does not mean that Kaikeyi should have acted wildly without applying her own mind. Manthara had told her in detail what to do, and this is why it is said here that the wicked hunch-back had trained Kaikeyi how to use the sword to vanquish her opponent, in this case the unarmed king Dasrath. ‘Unarmed’? Yes, the king was innocent, and he was not at all prepared to face the sudden attack that was launched on him from an unexpected quarter. If he had any inkling of what he was about to face, surely he would have come ‘armed’, i.e. prepared, to face Kaikeyi.

Remember: Dasrath was a mighty, wise, intelligent and resourceful King, and naturally he must have faced far worse situations in life while confronting his adversaries, and he had always triumphed over them. Why? Because he was prepared to face them; he would arm himself with all the information needed in advance, and then when he faced the opponent he did it confidently, defending himself and defeating his adversary, either by force of arm or logical arguments. But in the case of Kaikeyi, the poor king was caught unawares. Since he had no ill-will or malice in his heart, so when he heard all that Kaikeyi had said, and would say, regarding his decision to anoint Lord Ram on the throne and sidelining Bharat, it is but natural that the king was tongue-tied and stunned into immobility, for he did not know how to react to this nonsense.

The attacker, i.e. Kaikeyi, who had no mercy, remorse or pity in heart, had, in the meanwhile, thought that she has subdued her enemy by making him immobile, and so when the king showed some signs of movement by opening his eyes, the attacker immediately drew her ‘sword’ by adopting an aggressive posture, as if she threatening her victim with a deadly strike should he attempt to get up on his legs to offer challenge to her or defend himself, for she was not ready to accept anything else than what she demanded from him.]

लखी महीप कराल कठोरा । सत्य कि जीवनु लेइहि मोरा ॥ ३ ॥

बोले राउ कठिन करि छाती । बानी सबिनय तासु सोहाती ॥ ४ ॥

lakhī mahīpa karāla kaṭhōrā. satya ki jīvanu lē'ihī mōrā. 3.
bōlē rā'u kaṭhina kari chātī. bānī sabinaya tāsu sōhātī. 4.

When the weary and heart-broken king watched her aggressive posture, he wondered in amazement at the fiat of fate, thinking to himself whether this wily woman would indeed kill him; had she really decided to get rid of him by snuffing the life out of him. (3)

However, the king somehow brought his wits together and sufficiently strengthened his heart to make a resolve to speak to her. When he finally spoke, he was sweet and pleasant in his voice in a manner that would, in all likelihood, appeal to Kaikeyi¹. (4)

[Note—¹To wit, the king showed no outwardly anger or rancour while speaking to his wife, for he was a wise man who knew it won't work, for a raging fire needs cool water to douse its flame, and not hot oil. He was a statesman who was well-versed in the fine art of diplomacy and negotiations that are needed to settle thorny issues that any king would face in the routine course of his duties of running the affairs of the state.]

प्रिया बचन कस कहसि कुभाँती । भीर प्रतीति प्रीति करि हाँती ॥ ५ ॥
मोरें भरतु राम दुइ आँखी । सत्य कहउँ करि संकरु साखी ॥ ६ ॥

priyā bacana kasa kahasi kubhāmṭī. bhīra pratīti prīti kari hāmṭī. 5.
mōrēm bharatu rāmu du'i āṁkhī. satya kaha'um' kari saṅkaru sākhī. 6.

The king spoke most courteously: 'My dear (priyā)! How come that you have violated all norms of decency and courteousness by speaking so rudely, and using so crude a language that does not at all behoove of you, for you had always been very affectionate, affable and docile in your manners. (5)

Both Bharat and Ram are like my two eyes (for I love them equally and treat them without distinction). I tell you that this is a truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, and I can vouchsafe it in the name of Lord Shiva as I swear to its truthfulness. (6)

अवसि दूतु मैं पठइब प्राता । ऐहहिं बेगि सुनत दोउ भ्राता ॥ ७ ॥
सुदिन सोधि सबु साजु सजाई । देउँ भरत कहूँ राजु बजाई ॥ ८ ॥

avasi dūtu mairṁ patha'iba prātā. aihahim bēgi sunata dō'u bhrātā.
sudina sōdhi sabu sāju sajā'ī. dē'um' bharata kahum' rāju bajā'ī. 4.

Be sure that at dawn I shall dispatch messengers to call Bharat here, and the two brothers (Bharat and Shatrughan) would come as soon as they hear my message. (7)

Meanwhile, I will consult (astrologers and our priest, sage Vasistha) and decide on an auspicious day to anoint Bharat on the throne of Ayodhya with full honours and ceremonies. I will make a royal proclamation in this regard, and heralds would announce it around the city by beating drums and playing musical instruments. [That is no issue; it will be done without a second thought.] (8)

दो०. लोभु न रामहि राजु कर बहुत भरत पर प्रीति ।
मैं बड़ छोट बिचारि जियँ करत रहेउँ नृपनीति ॥ ३१ ॥

dōhā.

lōbhu na rāmahi rāju kara bahuta bharata para prīti.
mair̥m baṛa chōṭa bicāri jiyam̐ karata rahē'um̐ nr̥panīti. 31.

Ram has no greed or desire for the kingdom, and he loves Bharat immensely.

I was, however, merely following established traditions of how royal inheritance is made, because the eldest son ought to be appointed to the throne. That is why I decided to anoint Ram as he is the eldest son, but Bharat is his younger brother.

[To wit, I had no ulterior motive, nor had any bias for or against any of the two sons. My decision was solely based on established rules and regulations in such matters. But howbeit, if you want that Bharat be appointed to the throne, there is no problem with me, and neither would it be with Lord Ram, for both of us, me and Ram, love Bharat equally. Therefore, you need not worry, for I will make amends and arrange things as quickly and early as possible. It is no issue at all.] (Doha no. 31)

[Note—King Dasrath is addressing Kaikeyi's concern as angrily stated by her in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 30.

The king justifies his decision of selecting Lord Ram for anointment to the throne because he was the eldest of the four brothers, and it was an established system that the eldest son inherits the crown. So there was nothing amiss in it.

Kaikeyi has also admitted earlier that it is proper and in line of rules that the eldest son inherits the crown—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 15.]

चौ०. राम सपथ सत कहउँ सुभाऊ । राममातु कछु कहेउ न काऊ ॥ १ ॥
मैं सबु कीन्ह तोहि बिनु पँछें । तेहि तें परेउ मनोरथु छूछें ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

rāma sapatha sata kaha'um̐ subhā'ū. rāmamātu kachu kahē'u na kā'ū. 1.
mair̥m sabu kīnha tōhi binu pūm̐chēm̐. tēhi tēm̐ parē'u manōrathu chūchēm̐. 2.

The king continued to explain the situation to Kaikeyi: 'I swear in the name of Lord Ram¹ that I am speaking the truth that (neither I have any maliciousness or ill-will in my mind or heart, nor that) Kaushalya (the mother of Lord Ram) has spoken anything with me in this regard (of anointment of Lord Ram to the throne).

[To wit, don't harbour any suspicion against Kaushalya, thinking that she has prevailed upon me to select her son Lord Ram as the next king. No conspiracy has been hatched against either you or Bharat by anyone. As if just told you, this decision was solely an administrative one, taken by me in consultation with our ministers and pries, sage Vasistha. There is no hidden agenda against anyone whatsoever. Don't imagine there are ghosts when there are none.] (1)

The only mistake I think now that I made is that I did everything without consulting you¹; it is the apparent reason why all my desires stand annulled, and rendered null and void. (2)

[Note—¹The king should have added that he had neither consulted Kaushalya. It was not obligatory for him to seek permission from his wives in matters of state, for transition of power and who would be the next king is the sole prerogative of the ruling monarch. But Dasrath had not misused his authority at all; he had duly consulted his guru, all his ministers and courtiers too had wanted him to appoint Lord Ram to the throne, and it was in accordance to norms. Obviously, there was no need to consult queens in this matter.]

Then, why did Dasrath express regrets that he is sorry he did not talk with Kaikeyi on this matter? It was a courteous way to request her to forgive him for this small misstep, for it is not so grave a mistake that she is making a mountain out of an anthill, and blowing things out of proportions.]

रिस परिहरु अब मंगल साजू । कछु दिन गएँ भरत जुबराजू ॥ ३ ॥
एकहि बात मोहि दुखु लागा । बर दूसर असमंजस मागा ॥ ४ ॥

risa pariharu aba maṅgala sājū. kachu dina ga'eṁ bharata jubarājū. 3.
ēkahi bāta māṁōhi dukhu lāgā. bara dūsara asamanjasa māgā. 4.

Now therefore, calm down and discard your anger, but instead go and make arrangements of auspicious paraphernalia that would be needed for Bharat's anointment to the throne, for he would be ascend the throne in a few days. (3)

The above is no problem; I have no objection to Bharat ascending the throne. The issue that causes so much agony to me is your second demand (about Lord Ram going to the forest for fourteen years)—for it is so preposterous that it has distressed me beyond measure. It is absolutely ridiculous and confounding for you to ask me for such a strange wish that has put me in a great moral vexation, overwhelming me with consternation, and has left me wondering whether or not I ought to oblige you, which is a great dilemma that I now face¹. (4)

[Note—¹What is the dilemma for Dasrath? For one, if the king refuses to oblige Kaikeyi, he would be breaking his own words of honour, and it would be an unthinkable thing for him to do by his own admission—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precede Doha no. 28.]

The other reason is that it was an established tradition in the kingdom that the eldest son would inherit the crown; how could the king override rules just on the whims of a woman? Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 31. Even Kaikeyi has admitted it herself in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 15.

Besides all these, Lord Ram has always been loved by all, not only by Kaikeyi herself but also by everyone else in Ayodhya. The Lord never offended anyone. So the king failed to understand the cause that has so much angered Kaikeyi that she would settle for nothing else short of sending Lord Ram to the forest as punishment. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 15; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 32.}

अजहूँ हृदउ जरत तेहि आँचा । रिस परिहास कि साँचेहुँ साँचा ॥ ५ ॥

कहु तजि रोषु राम अपराधू । सबु कोउ कहइ रामु सुठि साधू ॥ ६ ॥

ajahūṁ hr̥ḍa'u jarata tēhi āṁcā. risa parihāsa ki sām̐cēhum̐ sām̐cā. 5.
kahu taji rōṣu rāma aparādhū. sabu kō'u kaha'i rāmu suṭhi sād̐hū. 6.

It is still causing intense heart-burn to me, and I am literally burning in its heat. Tell me, is it simply a sign of your anger that you have made this second demand just to tease me, or are you serious about it? Is it the truth that you wish the second demand fulfilled, or is it merely rhetoric? (5)

Keep aside your anger and tell me honestly, with a calm mind, what is the fault of Lord Ram (for which he is being so harshly punished)? Everyone says that Ram is like a saint¹.

[The reason is that he is pure in heart and uncorrupt in mind; he is calm, and he never uses harsh words for anyone; he loves one and all. It defies my understanding why thou hast become so annoyed with him; how and why wouldst he offend thee? It is unbelievable.] (6)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 1; (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 2. (iii) Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 3; (b) Kishkindha Kand, (iv) Doha no. 7; (c) Sundar Kand, (v) Doha no. 22; (d) Lanka Kand, (vi) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 7.]

तुहूँ सराहसि करसि सनेहू । अब सुनि मोहि भयउ संदेहू ॥ ७ ॥

जासु सुभाउ अरिहि अनुकूला । सो किमि करिहि मातु प्रतिकूला ॥ ८ ॥

tuhūṁ sarāhasi karasi sanēhū. aba suni mōhi bhaya'u sandēhū. 7.
jāsu subhā'u arihi anukūlā. sō kimi karihi mātu pratikūlā. 8.

Even you have praised him (Lord Ram) and love him¹. Now, in this context, when I hear what you have said, it raises doubts in my mind (as I have told you earlier, that is, are you simply jesting with me in asking for Ram's forest exile, or do you seriously mean what you say). (7)

I am absolutely astonished and confounded (about your annoyance with Lord Ram) because he whose nature is such that even enemies have nothing against him², how can he ever become opposed to his mother; how can he ever do anything that would so gravely offend his mother (that she would want him sent to the forest as punishment)? [To wit, I can't believe it. Surely there is more to it than meets the eye. Come on, disclose the secret to me.] (8)

[Note—¹It is a matter for record that Kaikeyi has personally acknowledged what Dasrath says now. Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 15.

Kaikeyi has also admitted that it is proper and in line of rules that the eldest son inherits the crown—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 15.

So this is the reason why Dasrath is astonished at her demands that Lord Ram be sent to the forest.

²Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Kishkindha Kand, Doha no. 7; (b) Sundar Kand, (ii) Doha no. 22; (c) Lanka Kand, (iii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 17; (iv) Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 45.]

दो०. प्रिया हास रिस परिहरहि मागु बिचारि बिबेकु ।
जेहि देखौं अब नयन भरि भरत राज अभिषेकु ॥ ३२ ॥
dōhā.

priyā hāsa risa pariharahi māgu bicāri bibēku.
jēhīm dēkhauṁ aba nayana bhari bharata rāja abhiṣēku. 32.

Dasrath said further: ‘My dear (priyā)! Please discard your jest and anger. Become serious and think over the matter by applying your mind and discretion judiciously before asking for boons you need to be fulfilled. Let it be so that we can all enjoy seeing Bharat’s anointment to the throne; let us fill our eyes with the sight of Bharat being appointed to the throne as the Prince-Regent.’¹ (Doha no. 32)

[Note—¹Dasrath is making a desperate attempt to make Kaikeyi change her mind. The verses that follow herein below also point in this direction.]

चौ०. जिए मीन बरु बारि बिहीना । मनि बिनु फनिकु जिए दुख दीना ॥ १ ॥
कहउँ सुभाउ न छलु मन माहीं । जीवनु मोर राम बिनु नाहीं ॥ २ ॥
समुझि देखु जियँ प्रिया प्रबीना । जीवनु राम दरस आधीना ॥ ३ ॥
caupāī.

ji'ai mīna baru bāri bihīnā. mani binu phaniku ji'ai dukha dīnā. 1.
kaha'um' subhā'u na chalu mana māhīm. jīvanu mōra rāma binu nāhīm. 2.
samujhi dēkhu jiyam' priyā prabīnā. jīvanu rāma darasa ādhīnā. 3.

[King Dasrath continued to plead with Kaikeyi to change her mind, telling her that if she persisted with her outrageous demand of sending Lord Ram to the forest for fourteen long years, then it is almost sure that she faces widowhood.]

The king said: ‘A fish might survive without water, and a serpent who sports a ‘Mani’ on its hood¹ may manage to live a miserable life without it (just like a blind man does)², --- (1)

--- But I tell you sincerely, most honestly and truthfully—because deceit or conceit or pretensions are not in my nature, nor are they my habit—that I can’t survive in the absence of Ram³. (2)

Oh my wise and darling wife (*priyā prabīnā*)! Understand what I am saying and weigh its gravity in your heart, and believe me when I say that my life depends on my being able to see Ram regularly (for if I don't see him I become very restless, and it would be impossible for me to live for fourteen long years without seeing him when I can't live even for a day without getting a chance to see him).⁴ (3)

[Note—¹It is believed that there exists a special type of serpent which has a luminescent sac that forms naturally on its hood. This sac is filled with some secretions from the serpent's own body, but it glows in the dark. The serpent would come out of its hole in the night looking for food, and it can see anything only in the light of this sac. If the sac is removed, the serpent is unable to see anything, but it somehow would manage to survive like a blind man does.

It is impossible for a fish to survive without water, but it may do so by some miracle.

²We have read earlier that at an ancient time, king Manu, who later on became king Dasrath in his next life, had done severe Tapa (penance and austerity) with an objective of having a divine vision and direct communion with the Supreme Being. His Tapa was successful, and when the Supreme Lord appeared before him, the king asked him for essentially two boons: viz. one to have the privilege of seeing the Lord as his son, and second, that he should love the Lord in his form as a son so much that his (the king's) life should revolve around the Lord and depend upon him to such an extent that without the sight of the Lord, albeit in the form of his son, the king would die just like a serpent dies without seeing his 'Mani'. Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 151 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede it; (b) Ayodhya Kand, (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 143; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 154.

Hence, king Dasrath was being truthful to that word given to the Supreme Being, and is being honest in his assertion now to Kaikeyi that without Lord Ram he would die tormented and distraught like a serpent does when he loses its Mani; it is a reaffirmation of the king's eternal wish that he should not be separated from the Lord.

³King Dasrath says that even if it was possible for a fish to survive without water, and the serpent without its sac, it is impossible for him to live without Lord Ram.

⁴Not only Dasrath, Lord Ram was so much loved by the citizens of Ayodhya that when the Lord went to the forest, the entire city was plunged in gloom and sorrow, and its inhabitants were compelled to live a sorrowful life of despair and grief just like the case of the serpent which somehow survives without its luminescent sac. But the reason why the citizens could survive is that they longed for that auspicious day when they would see their beloved Lord Ram once again at the end of fourteen years. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 86 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it.}

The difference between Dasrath and the rest of the citizens is obvious: For Dasrath, Lord Ram was his dearest son who lived close to him within the walls of the same palace, and whom he saw many times in the day, or at least once or twice a day during natural course of life just as a father would interact with his son normally. For instance, they would meet each other to discuss state matters. But it is not expected nor was it practical that every single citizen would meet their prince in a similar way;

it is simply impractical to happen. So, the citizens would be contented that whenever they wished, they could easily visit the palace and meet their beloved Lord. Hence, they were accustomed to live without seeing Lord Ram on a daily basis, while Dasrath would get upset if he didn't meet the Lord even for a single day.]

सुनि मृदु बचन कुमति अति जरई । मनहुँ अनल आहुति घृत परई ॥ ४ ॥
 कहइ करहु किन कोटि उपाया । इहाँ न लागिहि राउरि माया ॥ ५ ॥
 देहु कि लेहु अजसु करि नाहीं । मोहि न बहुत प्रपंच सोहाहीं ॥ ६ ॥

sunī mṛḍu bacana kumati ati jara'ī. manahum' anala āhuti ghr̥ta para'ī. 4.
 kaha'i karahu kina kōṭi upāyā. ihām' na lāgihi rā'uri māyā. 5.
 dēhu ki lēhu ajasu kari nāhīm. mōhi na bahuta prapañca sōhāhīm. 6.

When the wicked Kaikeyi heard the king speak softly to her in a pleasant tone, she became more furious, instead of calming down, as if clarified butter (ghṛta) has been poured on a burning fire¹. (4)

She snarled and looked at her husband with a sneer in her face, speaking sternly to him: 'Come, come. Don't try your tricks with me, for no matter how much you try your craft and cunning pretence of showing affection for me, it won't work this time.

[To wit, thou might as well try millions of cunning devices to distract my attention, but none would succeed, be rest assured. I am not a fool to be so easily deceived by thine pretentious behaviour of being polite and docile once thou havest been caught in the middle of creating mischief for me and my son.] (5)

Listen, either affirm that you will fulfill the promise you have made to me, or say you won't and invite immense infamy on yourself². I don't like too much of a drama being played on me. (6)

[Note—¹Wicked people think that they have subjugated their opponent and have an upper hand over them when the latter shows any civility towards the former. Kaikeyi was incensed by politeness shown by Dasrath because she interpreted it as his weakness. She thought that Dasrath has so easily surrendered because he was guilty of conscience, that when she suddenly lifted the veil from over his deceitful plan he was caught unawares and swooned. It means, she thought, that her suspicion regarding her husband's intention was correct, for otherwise he would have sternly denied her allegations and taken her to task boldly like a man, but not buckle like a jelly fish. It is similar to the case of a thief caught red-handed during the act, for then he would plead for mercy and kneel down seeking forgiveness, almost in the same way as Dasrath was doing now.

²Kaikeyi was referring to Dasrath's admission that if he breaks his promise it would mean a bad reputation for him, and would burden him with guilt of being untruthful to his own words. It would be an ignominious act for him, especially when he had invoked the name of Lord Ram and the glorious reputation of his family while making the promise to her. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos.

6-7 that precede Doha no. 26; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precede Doha no. 28.}]

रामु साधु तुम्ह साधु सयाने । राममातु भलि सब पहिचाने ॥ ७ ॥
जस कौसिलाँ मोर भल ताका । तस फलु उन्हहि देउँ करि साका ॥ ८ ॥

rāmu sādhu tumha sādhu sayānē. rāmamātu bhali saba pahicānē. 7.
jasa kausilām̃ mōra bhala tākā. tasa phalu unhahi dē'um̃ kari sākā. 8.

[Taunting Dasrath further, Kaikeyi continued with her fierce tirade against the humble and innocent king, using sarcasm and caustic remarks to hurt Dasrath in her wild attempt to punish him for a mischief he hadn't committed.]

‘Oh yes,’ said Kaikeyi sarcastically, ‘I know you all very well! Ram is a saintly and gentlemanly person, you are wiser and more saintly and gentler than him, and Ram’s mother (Kaushalya) is surely a very nice person! I know the truth of all of you. (7)

Truly, the way Kaushalya has thought well of me, I shall repay her in the same coin by making her taste the same fruit that she had ripened for me to taste.¹ (8)

[Note—¹Kaikeyi is alluding to Manthara’s warning in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 17—to Doha no. 19.

She dragged in Kaushalya’s name because Dasrath had told her that Kaushalya had nothing to do with his decision to anoint Lord Ram to the throne—apropos: Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 31. The very mention of Kaushalya, whom Kaikeyi saw as her arch rival and enemy, stoked intense hatred in her heart and mind, and it was this feeling of hate that vented itself out in her accusing Lord Ram’s mother in trying to play smart with her. It is a clear case of rivalry between jealous wives, and it has a message too—of the evil consequences of keeping more than one wife, either legitimate or as extramarital.]

दो०. होत प्रातु मुनिबेष धरि जौं न रामु बन जाहिं ।
मोर मरनु राउर अजस नृप समुझिअ मन माहिं ॥ ३३ ॥
dōhā.

hōta prātu munibēṣa dhari jaur̃ na rāmu bana jāhir̃.
mōra maranu rā'ura ajasa nr̃pa samujhi'a mana māhir̃. 33.

Kaikeyi made her decision clear by declaring in an unequivocal language: ‘If Ram does not proceed to the forest dressed as a hermit at dawn, then the king must be sure in his mind that my death is a foregone conclusion, and it will certainly mean immense ignominy for him (i.e. Dasrath).

[I have nothing more to say. Now the ball is in the king’s court; let him play his hand now. Don’t blame me later on of playing foul; don’t accuse me of acting truant. I am a fair player, and my cards are on the table.]’ (Doha no. 33)

चौ०. अस कहि कुटिल भई उठि ठाढ़ी । मानहुँ रोष तरंगिनि बाढ़ी ॥ १ ॥

पाप पहार प्रगट भइ सोई । भरी क्रोध जल जाइ न जोई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

asa kahi kuṭila bha'ī uṭhi ṭhāṛhī. mānahuṁ rōṣa taraṅgini bāṛhī. 1.
pāpa pahāra pragaṭa bha'i sō'ī. bhārī krōdha jala jā'i na jō'ī. 2.

Saying this, the wicked woman (Kaikeyi) stood up with a start, as if she was being swept away by a renewed wave of anger and wrathfulness. (1)

That turbulent river (symbolized by Kaikeyi) had its origin in a mountain symbolizing wickedness and an evil mind, and it had waves symbolizing anger that churned so fiercely that it made this river (Kaikeyi and her demeanours) look very wild and dangerous. (2)

[Note—In this metaphor, Kaikeyi is the turbulent river, her ferocious anger is the wave that churns her from within, her evil mind and selfishness are the mighty mountain from whence this river originates, and the poor king is the unfortunate victim who is trapped in this river and trying to navigate it in an attempt to find a way to cross it and reach the other side safely, without being drowned. But unfortunately, no matter how hard the king tries, he couldn't escape the whirlpool of churning waters in this river. Every attempt he makes to extricate himself from this quagmire drags him further into it.]

दोउ बर कूल कठिन हठ धारा । भवँ कूबरी बचन प्रचारा ॥ ३ ॥

ढाहत भूपरूप तरु मूला । चली बिपति बारिधि अनुकूला ॥ ४ ॥

dō'u bara kūla kaṭhina haṭha dhārā. bhavam'ra kūbarī bacana pracārā. 3.
ḍhāhata bhūparūpa taru mūlā. calī bipati bāridhi anukūlā. 4.

Further, the two boons promised by the king are like the two opposite banks of this river. The stubbornness of Kaikeyi represents the currents in this river that are difficult to negotiate. The instigation and stoking of emotions by the evil advice given to Kaikeyi by the wicked hunch-backed Manthara are like the eddy currents that keep the waters of this river churning violently, making it turbulent. (3)

This fierce river was determined to uproot the tree representing the distraught king Dasrath, causing his ruin, as it menacingly meanders its way relentlessly towards the ocean symbolized by grief, disaster and doom. (4)

[Note—These four verses, nos. 1-4, are fine examples of use of poetic imagery that the saintly poet Tulsidas was renowned for. In verse no. 3 we can easily see that even if Kaikeyi had for a moment wished to calm down and come to her senses when her husband said on oath that he had a clear conscience and there was no crookedness in whatever he was doing, adding that he was ready to comply with Kaikeyi's first

demand of making Bharat as the Prince-Regent, but that there was no sense in sending Lord Ram to the forest because he was harmless by his very nature and would pose no danger to anyone—but soon she would recall the words of Manthara, and immediately flared up again. This situation is likened to the energy generated by eddy currents that makes the otherwise calm waters of river agitated, churning the river in the form of countless whirlpools.

When the river is violent, its currents rub against the banks and undercut the roots of trees, toppling them. Similarly, king Dasrath is gradually succumbing to the emotional blackmail he is being subjected to by Kaikeyi, and soon he would yield.

Even as a great river heads towards the ocean, overcoming every obstacle in its path and sweeping everything along, Kaikeyi's wickedness, her anger and stubbornness would create endless grief for Ayodhya, making the otherwise prosperous and thriving city almost desolate, and resulting in the ultimate death of Dasrath.]

लखी नरेस बात फुरि साँची । तिय मिस मीचु सीस पर नाची ॥ ५ ॥
गहि पद बिनय कीन्ह बैठारी । जनि दिनकर कुल होसि कुठारी ॥ ६ ॥

lakḥī narēsa bāta phuri sāṁcī. tiya misa mīcu sīs para nācī. 5.
gahi pada binaya kīnha baiṭhārī. jani dinakara kula hōsi kuṭhārī. 6.

The king was reconciled to the fact that it seems to be true that his death was dangling on his head in the guise of this woman. (5)

Still, the distraught king made another attempt to find some solution to this vexed situation. So he caught hold of Kaikeyi's legs and pleaded with her to sit down, saying: 'Do not become an axe to cut down this magnificent tree representing the glorious Solar Race to which our family belongs.

["What art thou doing; didst thee ever think over it? Calm down, and weigh the pros and cons of thine actions. Thine anger hast made thee blindfolded, and thou art unwittingly heading to disaster, dragging the whole family along with thee."]¹ (5)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 29 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it.]

मागु माथ अबहीं देउँ तोही । राम बिरहँ जनि मारसि मोही ॥ ७ ॥
राखु राम कहँ जेहि तेहि भाँती । नाहिं त जरिहि जनम भरि छाती ॥ ८ ॥

māgu mātha abahīm dē'um' tōhī. rāma biraham' jani mārasi mōhī. 7.
rākhu rāma kahum' jēhi tēhi bhām'tī. nāhīm ta jarihi janama bhari chātī. 8.

Ask me to offer my head to you as a sacrifice to make a compromise, and it shall be done immediately. But, don't kill me with the grief of separation from Ram¹. (7)

Keep Ram somehow, by any means whatsoever; modify your demands in this respect in any other suitable way that you deem fit. Otherwise, mind you, that you shall regret for your entire life; your heart shall burn and roast you for the rest of your life.² (8)

[Note—¹Dasrath is reiterating once again what he had said earlier in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 33.

We shall read that by-and-by, Dasrath died with grief of separation from Lord Ram—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 155 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede it; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 174.

²We shall also read about the truthfulness of this prophesy by Dasrath, because sage Bharadwaj has said the same thing about her to Bharat in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 207.

But at the same time, sage Bharadwaj has told Bharat that it was not Kaikeyi's fault, but it was Saraswati who had corrupted her wisdom. Hence, Kaikeyi was merely a victim of circumstances that made her the scapegoat for all the mischief that was created by Saraswati on behest of the gods, and therefore Kaikeyi deserves forgiveness and pity. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 206.}

दो०. देखी व्याधि असाध नृपु परेउ धरनि धुनि माथ ।

कहत परम आरत बचन राम राम रघुनाथ ॥ ३४ ॥

dōhā.

dēkhī byādhi asādha nṛpu parē'u dharani dhuni mātha.

kahata parama ārata bacana rāma rāma raghunātha. 34.

When Kaikeyi did not respond to his pleadings, stubborn and merciless as she was, the king knew that this disease was incurable (i.e. there was no way out, there was no way he could make his wife come to her senses, and so he was doomed).

He was so distraught and dismayed, so disgusted and exasperated that he beat his head in regret and frustration as he slumped and fell to the ground (as if swooning)¹, wailing and lamenting gravely even as he remembered Lord Ram in a pitiful tone and sobbed: 'Oh Ram, oh Lord of king Raghu's race!' (Doha no. 34)

[Note—¹The king decided that Kaikeyi was un-amenable, and it was futile to make her see sense any more. He had warned her of the gravity of the situation, and had clearly told her the serious consequences that would follow if she remains adamant—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 33 (that he would die, leaving her a widow); (ii) Chaupai line nos. 6 and 8 that precede Doha no. 34 (that the family faced doom and ignominy, and that she would have to regret and lament for the rest of her life).

He had been very polite and civil with her, had spoken sweetly and affectionately, and had even fallen at her feet to calm her down. He has even offered his head as a sacrifice if she would relent. What more can a person do to soften another person who is seething with anger and determined to wreak vengeance. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 25 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 27; (iii) Chaupai

line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 31; (iv) Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 34.}

King Dasrath would wail in a similar manner at the time of his death. Then too he would repeatedly call out the name of Lord Ram. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 155.]

चौ०. व्याकुल राउ सिथिल सब गाता । करिनि कलपतरु मनहुँ निपाता ॥ १ ॥

कंठु सूख मुख आव न बानी । जनु पाठीनु दीन बिनु पानी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

byākula rā'u sithila saba gātā. karini kalapataru manahum' nipātā. 1.
kaṇṭhu sūkha mukha āva na bānī. janu pāṭhīnu dīna binu pānī. 2.

The distraught king was crestfallen, most agitated, and overwhelmed with agony; his body was numbed into immobility. He resembled an evergreen tree that had been trampled over and uprooted by a wild elephant. (1)

His throat became so parched that he could not utter a word, and his miserable condition resembled a fish that was suffering intensely for want of water. (2)

[Note—Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 146 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it. Here, Sumantra, the chief minister of king Dasrath, who was sent by the king with a chariot to try to persuade Lord Ram to return home, laments that the king would die grieving and wailing as soon as he learns that his sons Lord Ram and Laxman have refused to come back.]

पुनि कह कटु कठोर कैकेई । मनहुँ घाय महुँ माहुर देई ॥ ३ ॥

जौं अंतहुँ अस करतबु रहेऊ । मागु मागु तुझ केहि बल कहेऊ ॥ ४ ॥

puni kaha kaṭu kaṭhōra kaikēī. manahum' ghāya mahum' māhura dēī. 3.
jau'm antahum' asa karatabu rahē'ū. māgu māgu tumha kēhim bala kahē'ū. 4.

Once again, Kaikeyi resumed her taunts and sarcastic comments that seemed to spray poison (māhura) on the open wound of the poor king. (3)

She said contemptuously: 'If this was to be the end of your seeming resolve to fulfill your words, then why did you falsely pretend to be firm in keeping your vows.

[Fie; it is outrageous! Say, if thou wert so weak in thy character that thee wouldst buckle and fall down swooning so woefully as soon as thou discovered that thou won't be able to keep thy words, then why didst thou pretend to be steadfast and firm in thy resolve to honour thine words, citing the glorious traditions of thy family and even going to the extent of taking an oath in the name of Lord Ram. Shame unto thee!] (4)

दुइ कि होइ एक समय भुआला । हंसब ठठाइ फुलाउब गाला ॥ ५ ॥

दानी कहाउब अरु कृपनाई । होइ कि खेम कुसल रौताई ॥ ६ ॥

du'i ki hō'i ēka samaya bhu'ālā. hamśaba ṭhaṭhā'i phulā'uba gālā. 5.
dāni kahā'uba aru kṛpanā'ī. hō'i ki khēma kusala rautā'ī. 6.

How is it possible that there are two kings on the throne simultaneously¹? Say, is it ever possible to laugh boisterously and at the same time have a sullen face with a grave countenance? [No, these are two contradictory situations, and so it is not possible to have two princes ruling at the same time.] (5)

Is it ever possible for a person to be called a generous donor and be a miser at the same time? Similarly, is it possible that a warrior is never wounded or suffers scars on his body²? (6)

[Note—¹Kaikeyi refers to Dasrath's reluctance to send Lord Ram to the forest. She is very cunning. Dasrath has told her that he would send messengers to call Bharat back to Ayodhya, and he would also consult experts to decide on a day soon when he would be anointed on the throne—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 31.

But the king has not said that he would defer Lord Ram's anointment that was fixed for the next day, the day following the night when all this drama was taking place. Kaikeyi immediately became suspicious. She took it as a sign that the king would go ahead with his plans to anoint Lord Ram the very next day, and then he would go on deferring Bharat's anointment on one or the other pretext.

This is what Kaikeyi hints at when she says that there cannot be “two kings on the throne at the same time”. She means that the king would first put Lord Ram on the throne as planned earlier, and then to honour his words to Kaikeyi he would also appoint Bharat on the throne—how is ever possible. So, later on the king would find some excuse to delay Bharat's anointment. In the meantime, Lord Ram would have got a firm grip over the kingdom and its army by the virtue of his being the Prince-Regent. Hence, even if the king would make some moves to elevate Bharat to the throne, it is sure to be resisted by Lord Ram who would see Bharat as his competitor. It may also happen that Lord Ram would either imprison Bharat or banish him from the kingdom in order to prevent him from sharing the crown. This evil thought was so compelling that Kaikeyi could not shrug it off her mind, and expressed her apprehensions in this regard in this verse.

²In order to stress that it is not possible for two princes or kings to share the same crown, Kaikeyi cites three instances to show the impossibility of it.

The first example is that of a man laughing and having a sullen face simultaneously. The second example is of a man being generous and charitable while being a stingy miser at the same time. The third example is of a person who claims himself to be brave warrior who has participated in many battles, but says that he was never hurt. These things are contradictory to each other; they are impossible to happen. Similarly, it is also impossible that there can be two kings ruling from the same throne.

So therefore, Kaikeyi demanded that Dasrath would have to decide whom to make the next king: would it be Lord Ram as he had planned, or would it be Bharat as he has promised her.]

छाड़हु बचनु कि धीरजु धरहू । जनि अबला जिमि करुना करहू ॥ ७ ॥
तनु तिय तनय धामु धनु धरनी । सत्यसंध कहूँ तून सम बरनी ॥ ८ ॥

chārahu bacanu ki dhīraju dharahū. jani abalā jimi karunā karahū. 7.
tanu tiya tanaya dhāmu dhanu dharanī. satyasandha kahum̐ tṛṇa sama
baranī. 8.

You must either go back on your words, or show courage, forbearance and resilience.
Don't wail and lament like a feeble woman. (7)

Verily, for a man of character and trustworthiness, who is truthful and honourable,
there is nothing more important than keeping his words, fulfilling his promises, and
honouring his vows.

Truly, for such an illustrious man, his own body, his wife, his sons, his home
and his wealth, nay, every imaginable thing that belongs to him, are inconsequential
when it comes to fulfilling his promises and honouring his words¹. (8)

[Note—¹To wit, a truthful man would sacrifice everything he has if the need arises to
do so to honour his words given to someone.

This being the case, taunted Kaikeyi, Dasrath ought to sacrifice his life, his
love for his son Lord Ram, his kingdom, et al, if he wished that history would
remember him as an honourable man who was true to his words.]

दो०. मरम बचन सुनि राउ कह कहु कछु दोषु न तोर ।
लागेउ तोहि पिसाच जिमि कालु कहावत मोर ॥ ३५ ॥
dōhā.

marama bacana suni rā'u kaha kahu kachu dōṣu na tōra.
lāgē'u tōhi pisāca jimi kālu kahāvata mōra. 35.

When the king heard these words of Kaikeyi that seemed to pierce through him
mercilessly, he felt very sorry, and retorted: 'Alack-a-day! No, the way thou are
behaving and speaking are none of thine fault, for it is apparent that my death and
doom havest assumed the form of a Devil who hast possessed thee, and is using thee
as his spokesperson (to torment my soul and hasten my end).¹' (Doha no. 35)

[Note—¹Dasrath was flabbergasted and astonished at Kaikeyi's rude and irreverent
behaviour that defied all logic and rationality. She was so vehement and crude in her
language as if she was talking to a condemned criminal convicted of a heinous crime
against her, and not to her husband who had always so much loved her. Dasrath now
concluded that the Devil has possessed his wife, and therefore there is no use in trying
to reason with her as she wouldn't listen to anything. To wit, Dasrath virtually
surrendered himself to his doomed fate, realizing that Kaikeyi's mind was thoroughly
corrupted and firmly antagonized against him, his son Lord Ram, and the Lord's

mother Kaushalya. The next set of verses that follow herein below affirm this belief of Dasrath.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 30 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it; (ii) Doha no. 34 along with Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes it.]

चौ०. चहत न भरत भूपतहि भोरें । बिधि बस कुमति बसी जिय तोरें ॥ १ ॥

सो सबु मोर पाप परिनामू । भयउ कुठाहर जेहिं बिधि बामू ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

cahata na bharata bhūpatahi bhōrēm. bidhi basa kumati basī jiya tōrēm. 1.
sō sabu mōra pāpa parināmū. bhaya'u kuṭhāhara jēhim bidhi bāmū. 2.

Dasrath continued: 'It is absolutely certain that Bharat never covets the crown, he has no greed for it; he definitely has no intention at all whatsoever to become a sovereign.

It is so regrettable that the fiat of an ill fate and dictates of a crooked destiny has decreed that evil counsel should possess your mind, transform your heart into a stone, and transmute you to a Devil. (1)

Nay, all these misfortunes are nothing but the consequences of my sins and any misdeed that I may have inadvertently done in the past, as they have made the Creator ("bidhi"; the god who determines a person's destiny) so sternly opposed to me that he would all of a sudden, and most unexpectedly and at an improper time, use an axe on me by turning the tide against me (and pushing me to my doom)¹. (2)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 29; (ii) Doha no. 171; (iii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 92.]

सुबस बसिहि फिरि अवध सुहाई । सब गुन धाम राम प्रभुताई ॥ ३ ॥

करिहहिं भाइ सकल सेवकाई । होइहि तिहुँ पुर राम बड़ाई ॥ ४ ॥

subasa basihi phiri avadha suhāī. saba guna dhāma rāma prabhutāī. 3.
karihahim bhāī sakala sēvakāī. hōīhi tihum' pura rāma barāī. 4.

Remember (my prophesy) that one day Ayodhya will once again flourish, becoming magnificent and vibrant afresh under the sovereignty of Lord Ram¹, who is an abode of all good virtues and auspiciousness. (3)

Remember also that all the brothers would cheerfully serve Lord Ram and be loyal to him². His glory and fame would spread far and wide, to all the corners of the three divisions of this world³, and he would be praised and honoured everywhere⁴. (4)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 3; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 11; (iii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 12; (iv) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no.

20—to Doha no. 23; (v) Doha no. 26—to Doha no. 27; (vi) Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 28—to Doha no. 29.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 25; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 26; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 32; (iv) Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 36.

³The three worlds are heaven, earth and nether world.

Now that it was a certainty that Lord Ram would be obliged to go to the forest, Dasrath predicts that Kaikeyi's designs would ultimately fail, as some day the Lord would return to Ayodhya and become its sovereign and the city would celebrate the Lord's return and flourish once again in the same way as it is now, though for sometime the city would become desolate and cheerless while Lord Ram lives in the forest. But this will change as soon as the Lord returns home at the end of fourteen years of exile.

Further, Dasrath says that Kaikeyi's wishes that Bharat would alone rule the kingdom and Lord Ram would never return, or if he tried to do so he would be opposed and repulsed by Bharat, would also not fructify, as when the Lord returns and assumes the responsibility of the crown, all his brothers, including Bharat, would serve under him, and that too willingly, cheerfully and loyally.

To wit, none of Kaikeyi's wishes would succeed; the only effect of her wickedness is to bring death unto her husband, and a temporary period of gloom and dismay that would descend on the vibrant city of Ayodhya.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 20; (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 26; (iii) Doha no. 30 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede it; (iv) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 31.]

तोर कलंकु मोर पछिताऊ । मुएहुँ न मिटिहि न जाइहि काऊ ॥ ५ ॥
अब तोहि नीक लाग करु सोई । लोचन ओट बैठु मुहु गोई ॥ ६ ॥

tōra kalaṅku mōra pachitā'ū. mu'ēhum'na miṭihi na jā'ihi kā'ū. 5.
aba tōhi nīka lāga karu sō'ī. lōcana oṭa baiṭhu muhu gō'ī. 6.

The scar of ignominy and the taint of being exceedingly wicked and pervert would not leave you even after you die, and similarly, death won't be able to erase the depth of guilt, and its accompanying remorse and regret, that has swamped my conscience at present.

[To wit, neither wouldst thou be ever able to wash-off the deep stain of wickedness and perversion with its attendant infamy that thou havest voluntarily cast upon thy own self for no rhyme or reason, nor would I be ever able to free myself of a guilty conscience for so easily allowing myself to fall prey to cunning and deceit of a selfish and vile woman like the one thou art. I shalt also regret that I could not anoint Ram on the throne, an act that was fully justified, morally upright for it was in accordance with established traditions, and was endorsed by guru Vasistha and all other ministers and courtiers too, just because I fell down meekly as a victim to a vile lady's selfish whims, and buckled underneath.] (5)

Woe betide upon you; do what you think is good and fit for yourself, but get out of my sight, and don't ever show your face to me. (6)

जब लगि जिऔं कहउँ कर जोरी । तब लगि जनि कछु कहसि बहोरी ॥ ७ ॥
फिरि पछितैहसि अंत अभागी । मारसि गाड़ नहारू लागी ॥ ८ ॥

jaba lagi ji'auñ kaha'um' kara jōrī. taba lagi jani kachu kahasi bahōrī. 7.
phiri pachitaihasi anta abhāgī. mārasi gā'i nahārū lāgī. 8.

Prithee, I request you with my folded hands that as long as I live now onwards, don't dare to speak to me any more. (7)

You will regret immensely at the end, but it would be too late by then, for you would have killed a cow for the sake of your share of meat¹.

[To wit, sooner rather than later thou wilt lament and repent for what thou hav'st done. Thou hav'st wreaked havoc on a harmless and honest man like me, and at the same time causing immense suffering to Lord Ram who is completely innocent and a most affable person, just to extract thine pound of flesh in the form of grabbing the throne on behalf of thine son Bharat. But wait, oh thee wretched woman, time wilt makest thou grieve and wail endlessly, with no scope for redemption or redressal ever.] (8)

[Note—¹Killing a cow is a grave and an unpardonable sin. So, Dasrath says here that history won't ever forgive Kaikeyi for what she had done, for she would go down in history as the killer of her own husband, as the one who had wrought great ignominy on the otherwise honourable, upright and praiseworthy race of illustrious kings descending from the ancient king Raghu, who compelled an upright king to break ancient traditions by forcing him not anoint his eldest son to the throne of the kingdom, who had been instrumental in causing immense amount of sorrows and grief for the innocent citizens of Ayodhya, and who had caused unnecessary suffering to Lord Ram for no rhyme or reason, just to satisfy her fanatical whims and give effect to her imaginary ideas.]

दो०. परेउ राउ कहि कोटि बिधि काहे करसि निदानु ।
कपट सयानि न कहति कछु जागति मनहुँ मसानु ॥ ३६ ॥
dōhā.

parē'u rā'u kahi kōṭi bidhi kāhē karasi nidānu.
kapaṭa sayāni na kahati kachu jāgati manahum' masānu. 36.

The king tried his best and offered numerous arguments in an attempt to persuade Kaikeyi to change her stubborn stance, but having failed to move her even a wee whit, the distraught king fell down on the ground weeping and lamenting¹: 'Say, why art thou bringing complete ruin to one and all? [Tell me, what Devil hast possessed thee; what black magic doth thou intend to test on us. Woe betide upon thine evil soul;

what curse doth thou bringest upon those who had always shown so much affection to thee?']

Kaikeyi, meanwhile, remained silent, adamant and unmoved; she was like a necromancer who is busy performing black magic in a cremation ground, paying no heed to the surroundings but intensely focused on raising the ghost². (Doha no. 36)

[Note—¹The king has fallen to the ground twice. This is the second time; the first time is mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 34.

The idea behind this scene is to stress the immensity of distress and the profundity of the grief that the king was facing.

²The imagery of the cremation ground and the raising of the ghost, a sight that is surely chilling and foreboding, has been used once again to describe the desolate and grief-stricken condition of the city of Ayodhya and the royal household after Lord Ram went to the forest. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 83; (ii) Doha no. 147.

Kaikeyi was determined to have her way; she was so stubborn that no amount of reasoning and explaining would have any affect on her. She showed no emotions at the wretched condition of her husband who was wailing and in great disturbance as he lay on the tormented ground as if some serious disease has suddenly caught hold of him, like a necromancer who cares little for the howling and growling and whistling of evil spirits around him in the crematorium while he is engaged in raising the ghost of the dead, for this evil black-magician is accustomed to such sights.]

चौ०. राम राम रट बिकल भुआलू । जनु बिनु पंख बिहंग बेहालू ॥ १ ॥

हृदयँ मनाव भोरु जनि होई । रामहि जाइ कहै जनि कोई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

rāma rāma raṭa bikala bhu'ālū. janu binu paṅkha bihaṅga bēhālū. 1.

hṛdayam' manāva bhōru jani hō'ī. rāmahi jā'i kahai jani kō'ī. 2.

The grief-stricken king kept on repeating the name of Lord Ram even as he became extremely agitated and tormented, resembling in his miserable condition a bird who has lost its wings¹. (1)

The king wished in his heart that the sun would not rise the next day, and that no one would go to inform Lord Ram of these unfortunate developments². (2)

[Note—¹The wing is the lifeline of a bird; if the wing is cut then the bird is half dead even before it actually dies. Likewise, king Dasrath was feeling extremely miserable and distraught as the thought of his being separated from Lord Ram haunted his soul.

A similar metaphor is cited in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 61 where Lord Ram laments for Laxman, saying that without Laxman his life would be like a bird whose wings were chopped off.

²King Dasrath had already announced that Lord Ram would be anointed on the throne the next day at such-and-such time, and preparations were in full swing. After giving orders to his ministers etc., the role of the king was very limited. So he hoped that if

the situation is managed properly and the auspicious hour for Lord Ram's anointment comes, then all the ministers and the royal priest, i.e. sage Vasistha, could step in to carry on with the formalities and complete the anointment of Lord Ram even if he was unable attend it personally, for they can handle this emergency in a diplomatic way by announcing to the public that the king was seized of some sudden attack of an illness that has caught him unawares, compelling him to remain in bed. This ploy would also help in speeding up the anointment process and gain sympathy of the citizens as they would support the idea that the crown should not become vacant in case of the king's untimely demise before an heir takes over charge.

Hence, the king fervently hoped that the unfortunate developments related to Kaikeyi's tantrums and her asking for the two preposterous promises to be fulfilled remains a secret and kept under wraps till the time Lord Ram is seated on the throne.]

उदउ करहु जनि रबि रघुकुल गुर । अवध बिलोकि सूल होइहि उर ॥ ३ ॥
भूप प्रीति कैकड़ कठिनाई । उभय अवधि बिधि रची बनाई ॥ ४ ॥

uda'u karahu jani rabi raghukula gura. avadha bilōki sūla hō'ihī ura. 3.
bhūpa prīti kaika'i kaṭhinā'ī. ubhaya avadhi bidhi racī banā'ī. 4.

He mentally prayed to his guru (the family priest, sage Vasistha), saying: 'Oh revered Guru! Please make it so happen that the sun does not rise in the morning, for if it does it would cause an intense grief in the heart of anyone who sees Ayodhya during the day.'¹*

[*This verse can be interpreted and read as follows also: "The king mentally prayed to the Sun God, who was the deity of the family of kings descending from the ancient king Raghu: 'Oh revered Sun God', said the king, 'Thou art the deity of Raghu's family! Please be kind not to rise in the morning, for if thou doest so then thine heart would be literally pierced with a lance when thy wouldst see the pain and grief that wouldst surely descend like a dark cloud on the city of Ayodhya.' "] (3)

The king's affectionate heart and innocent soul on the one hand, and Kaikeyi's stubborn rudeness and relentless pursuit of an evil design on the other hand, were like the two extremities of nature that the creator has crafted. (4)

[Note—¹It is because during this day, Lord Ram would be sent to the forest, leaving the city and its citizens wailing and lamenting in grief.

²To wit, king Dasrath represented the nature of a person with an affectionate heart and an innocent, simple soul, while Kaikeyi symbolized just the opposite, someone who is by nature crooked, merciless, selfish, pervert and cruel in heart.]

बिलपत नृपहि भयउ भिनुसारा । बीना बेनु संख धुनि द्वारा ॥ ५ ॥
पढ़हिं भाट गुन गावहिं गायक । सुनत नृपहि जनु लागहिं सायक ॥ ६ ॥

bilapata nr̥pahi bhaya'u bhinusārā. bīnā bēnu saṅkha dhuni dvārā. 5.
par̥hahim̐ bhāṭa guna gāvahim̐ gāyaka. sunata nr̥pahi janu lāgahim̐ sāyaka. 6.

The night passed in this way, and as soon as the day dawned there was the sound of musical instruments such as the Indian lute, the flute and the conch being played on the gate of the royal palace. (5)

The royal bards and minstrels began lauding the greatness and glories of the king's family by singing verses in its honour¹, but these caused immense torment and heartburn to the king (Dasrath) instead of pleasing him². (6)

[Note—¹In ancient times, it was a norm for court appointed poets and bards to compose and sing verses in the glories of the ruling monarch.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 194; (ii) Doha no. 262; (iii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 265.

²The king was very upset mentally and suffering from agony of the heart. In such a condition, songs and music were unbearable for him.]

मंगल सकल सोहाहिं न कैसें । सहगामिनिहि बिभूषन जैसें ॥ ७ ॥
तेहिं निसि नीद परी नहिं काहू । राम दरस लालसा उछाहू ॥ ८ ॥

maṅgala sakala sōhāhim̐ na kaisēm̐. sahaḡāminihi bibhūṣana jaisēm̐. 7.
tēhim̐ nisi nīda parī nahim̐ kāhū. rāma darasa lālasā uchāhū. 8.

These auspicious and celebratory signs (songs, playing of musical instruments) were not liked by the king in the same way as a wife, who is about to burn herself in the cremation fire of her dead husband, does not like to hear such things¹. (7)

The king could not sleep a wink that night; he had only one desire in his heart that kept him excited, which was to see Lord Ram². (8)

[Note—¹Songs and music and dance are acceptable when the mind is at rest; but when one is under duress and suffering from mental agony then these things are intolerable.

If a woman decides to end her life when her husband dies, instead of living a life of widowhood, she would accompany her dead husband's body and go through the funeral process to finally sit on the pyre that would burn the dead body of her husband during cremation, and thereby dies along with her husband. Obviously, this woman would abhor music and song in the face of death.

²The king could not sleep because he wanted to see his beloved Lord Ram at the earliest, and the Lord's memory kept him awake. He kept on muttering the name of Lord Ram for the rest of the night—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 37.]

दो०. द्वार भीर सेवक सचिव कहहि उदित रबि देखि ।
जागेउ अजहुँ न अवधपति कारनु कवनु बिसेषि ॥ ३७ ॥

dōhā.

dvāra bhīra sēvaka saciva kahahim udita rabi dēkhi.
jāgē'u ajahum'na avadhapati kāranu kavanu bisēṣi. 37.

As the day broke, a large crowd of servants, ministers and courtiers gathered at the gate of the royal palace.

When they saw the sun rising in the sky and there was still no information about the king and his plans for the day, they were filled with wonderment, talking amongst themselves: 'We wonder why the King of Ayodhya has not woken up yet (even though the sun has ascended quite a bit in the eastern horizon). Surely, there must be some special reason for it (for it is mysterious that the king would not get ready to attend to his daily routine duties pertaining to the affairs of the state even though it is quite after the sun making its appearance in the eastern horizon).' (Doha no. 37)

[Note—The citizens wondered: "It is quite odd that the king would not get up at day-break. He is usually up by this time, and since today is a special day as Lord Ram is to be anointed, it is very strange that we hear nothing from the king. We had expected that he would be ready even before we assembled here at the gate, but here we are, and there is no word from the king. Is there something unusual that delays the king from making his appearance before us?"]

चौ०. पछिले पहर भूपु नित जागा । आजु हमहि बड़ अचरजु लागा ॥ १ ॥
जाहु सुमंत्र जगावहु जाई । कीजिअ काजु रजायसु पाई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

pachilē pahara bhūpu nita jāgā. āju hamahi barā acaraju lāgā. 1.
jāhu sumantra jagāvahu jāī. kiji'a kāju rajāyasu pāī. 2.

The citizens were a bit amazed that the king was so late in rising. They talked amongst themselves, saying: 'The king is accustomed to waking up during the last quarter of the night, just before dawn. But since it is getting late and the sun is quite a way up in the sky, it seems very strange to us that there is no word yet from the king; it is very unusual.' (1)

Turning to Sumantra, the chief minister of the kingdom, they requested him to go inside the palace and wake the king up: 'Sumantra, please go and wake the king. Seek his instructions so that we can carry on with our respective duties pertaining to the affairs of the state*.'

[*This verse can be read as follows also: When it was getting unduly late, the assembled citizens approached Sumantra and requested him: 'Sumantra, please go and wake the king up. Take instructions from him and tell us what to do so that we can immediately engage ourselves in our assigned duties.'](2)

गए सुमंत्रु तब राउर माहीं । देखि भयावन जात डेराहीं ॥ ३ ॥
धाड़ खाड़ जनु जाड़ न हेरा । मानहुँ बिपति बिषाद बसेरा ॥ ४ ॥

ga'ē sumantru taba rā'ura māhīm. dēkhi bhayāvana jāta dērāhīm. 3.
dhā'i khā'i janu jā'i na hērā. mānahum' bipati biṣāda basērā. 4.

Then, Sumantra went inside the royal palace, but even from its threshold he could sense that something horrible was unfolding inside (because of the ominous atmosphere that surrounded the place and hung forebodingly like a heavy curtain outside the inner chambers), so much so that he felt a chilling wave of fear sweeping all over him and dragging his feet from moving forward¹. (3)

The surroundings were so ominous and gloomy that it appeared to him that the palace was haunted, and some sort of devil or evil spirit or monster was waiting to lunge at him so as to devour him as soon as he would dare to step inside.

He was so much taken aback and shocked that he dared not look around much, for it appeared to him that troubles and grief, calamities and sorrows, of the highest magnitude have taken shelter inside the royal palace. (4)

[Note—¹To wit, no sooner did Sumantra enter the palace than he felt that there was something seriously amiss inside, for the whole place bore a gloomy and foreboding look with a heavy atmosphere hanging like a dark cloud of doomsday. This was an evil omen that filled Sumantra with consternation, and he became thoughtful, for he was quite out of his wits and did not know how he would handle any unexpectedly shocking sight that he was by now quite sure he would meet as soon as he entered the inner chambers where the king was present.]

पूछें कोउ न ऊतरु देई । गए जेहिं भवन भूप कैकेई ॥ ५ ॥
कहि जयजीव बैठ सिरु नाई । देखि भूप गति गयउ सुखाई ॥ ६ ॥

pūchēm kō'u na ūtaru dē'i. ga'ē jēhīm bhavana bhūpa kaikē'i. 5.
kahi jayajīva baiṭha siru nā'i. dēkhi bhūpa gati gaya'u sukhā'i. 6.

However, Sumantra gathered courage and enquired from the palace attendants what the matter was, and where the king was, but no one replied. [It was much like a haunted and ghostly place where there is deathly silence, and dumb spirits and mute ghosts move around stealthily.]

Sumantra then moved to the part of the palace, the private apartments, where the king (Dasrath) and Kaikeyi were¹. (5)

Sumantra bowed his head before the king, greeting and saluting him as he sat down. But the frightful sight of the king and his dismal condition (as he lay in disarray on the ground, groaning and lamenting as if seized with some serious illness) filled Sumantra with utter consternation, and he became pale. (6)

[Note—¹Sumantra was a close confidante and the chief minister of Dasrath. So by the virtue of his office and closeness with the king, he had easy access to the royal palace. Hence, he knew its layout and the probable place he could meet the king in the early hours of the morning.]

सोच बिकल बिबरन महि परेऊ । मानहुँ कमल मूलु परिहरेऊ ॥ ७ ॥
सचिउ सभित सकइ नहिं पूछी । बोली असुभ भरी सुभ छूछी ॥ ८ ॥

sōca bikala bibarana mahi parē'ū. mānahum' kamala mūlu pariharē'ū. 7.
saci'u sabhita saka'i nahin pūchī. bōlī asubha bharī subha chūchī. 8.

The king was in a very miserable condition. He was overwhelmed with worries, extremely agitated, and lay on the ground very distressed and agonized as if a lotus flower has been detached from its root (and was about to wither up and die). (7)

The chief minister (Sumantra) was so upset himself that he was afraid to ask anything of the king.

Meanwhile, seeing the uneasy silence, and the reluctance on both the sides (the king and his chief minister) to speak, Kaikeyi, who was a reservoir of evil and devoid of anything that can be considered as good (asubha bharī subha chūchī), decided to break the ice by speaking herself. (8)

दो०. परी न राजहि नीद निसि हेतु जान जगदीसु ।
रामु रामु रटि भोरु किय कहइ न मरमु महीसु ॥ ३८ ॥
dōhā.

parī na rājahi nīda nisi hētu jāna jagadīsu.
rāmu rāmu raṭi bhōru kiya kaha'i na maramu mahīsu. 38.

Turning to Sumantra, Kaikeyi said: 'The king was unable to sleep during the night, but god only knows the reason for it.

He spent the night constantly repeating the name of Lord Ram, saying "Ram-Ram" the whole night. However, he would not tell (me) the cause of his distress.' (Doha no. 38)

[Note—What a great lie is Kaikeyi speaking! She was well aware of the cause of Dasrath's grief and agony, but here she gives the impression that she had been attending an ailing king through the night, yet could not find out what troubles him.]

चौ०. आनहु रामहि बेगि बोलाई । समाचार तब पूँछेहु आई ॥ १ ॥
चलेउ सुमंत्रु राय रुख जानी । लखी कुचालि कीन्हि कछु रानी ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

ānahu rāmahi bēgi bōlā'ī. samācāra taba pūm'chēhu ā'ī. 1.
calē'u sumantru rāya rukha jānī. lakhī kucālī kīnhi kachu rānī. 2.

Kaikeyi told Sumantra: 'Please go and bring Ram here immediately¹. Then ask anything more.' (1)

Sumantra glanced at Dasrath, and from the latter's gestures he concluded that he has the king's nod. So he departed from there to bring Lord Ram in.

However, Sumantra also concluded at the same time that it was very certain that the queen (Kaikeyi) has done some sort of mischief². (2)

[Note—¹Kaikeyi shows extreme urgency here. Why was she so eager to have Lord Ram brought there immediately even before Sumantra has had the time to talk with the king? Well, she was afraid that when the king finds that his trusted and powerful chief minister was at his side to support him, it was quite probable that the king would tell Sumantra what had transpired during the night, that he was totally against sending Lord Ram to the forest as it was a nonsensical and preposterous idea, and that Sumantra, by the virtue of his being the chief minister of the kingdom, has the authority and the power to take the final call on this matter which is very serious and would have a direct bearing on the future of the kingdom. Should that happen, feared the wicked woman, it was almost certain that Sumantra would not allow it to happen, and the city would rise in revolt against her, probably even imprisoning her for life under the authority of the council of ministers.

So, how would this situation change if Lord Ram comes there? Well, she knew the nature and character of the Lord, that he would never approve a tumultuous revolt in the city for his sake, and cause any harm to her. Besides this worldly view, it was also because whatever she had done was done by the quiet approval of the Lord and in accordance to his wishes, for nothing happens against the wishes of the Lord. Remember that after all, the Supreme Being had come down to this mortal world as Lord Ram with a great objective of freeing the world from the horrors of the demons, and not to become a king of any kingdom. So it was imperative for Lord Ram to go to the forest so that the main objective of the Lord's advent in this world could be successful.

Hence, if Lord Ram was present before Sumantra has had the time to consult Dasrath, the chances of the plan of the gods to maneuver things in such a way that Lord Ram would go to the forest would not fail. And even in case it fails, then at least the gods won't blame Kaikeyi for spoiling things, for then Lord Ram would be a witness to testify in favour of Kaikeyi.

²Sumantra was an experienced, intelligent and wise man; he was not a naïve. He could easily judge that this woman, given her evil character and selfish nature, must have done some crooked thing that has caused so much distress and grief to the king. It also seemed odd to him that she wouldn't let him talk to the king, or that the king wouldn't respond to his greetings, but insisted that Lord Ram be called forthwith. Surely there must be something wrong.]

सोच बिकल मग परइ न पाऊ । रामहि बोलि कहिहि का राऊ ॥ ३ ॥

उर धरि धीरजु गयउ दुआरें । पूँछहिं सकल देखि मनु मारें ॥ ४ ॥

sōca bikala maga para'i na pā'ū. rāmaḥi bōli kahihi kā rā'ū. 3.
ura dhari dhīraju gaya'u du'ārēm. pūm'chahim sakala dēkhi manu mārēm. 4.

As Sumantra was on the way to meet Lord Ram, he felt that his legs were heavy as lead, and he had to literally drag them forward, for his mind was completely vexed and he was filled with consternation, wondering about the nature and gravity of the matter, which was yet unknown to him, that the king wished to disclose only to Lord Ram¹ (3)

Somehow he managed to retain an exterior of calm. When he reached the palace gates, all those who were assembled there, eagerly awaiting his arrival and anxious to know what tidings he would bring, became alarmed when they saw his disconsolate condition and observed his sullen mood with a grave face where signs of worry and consternation were evidently manifest. They crowded around him and enquired what the matter was. (4)

[Note—¹Sumantra was utterly confounded as the king had preferred to keep silent and not give any hint to Sumantra, while the latter was with him, as to what was so serious that it was worrying him so much. This was quite unusual, for the king had always discussed even trifles with Sumantra, who was his trusted minister and confidante. King's silence and Kaikeyi's rude behaviour and wrathful countenance made Sumantra very uneasy, for, being an intelligent and experienced minister of the kingdom, he could easily guess that there was something very-very serious in the whole episode.]

समाधानु करि सो सबही का । गयउ जहाँ दिनकर कुल टीका ॥ ५ ॥
राम सुमंत्रहि आवत देखा । आदरु कीन्ह पिता सम लेखा ॥ ६ ॥

samādhānu kari sō sabahī kā. gaya'u jahām' dinakara kula ṭikā. 5.
rāma sumantrahi āvata dēkhā. ādaru kīnha pitā sama lēkhā. 6.

Sumantra diplomatically avoided answering directly, and adroitly deflected all queries¹.

He finally reached the palace of Lord Ram, who was the most exalted and like an ornament in the Solar Race (dinakara kula ṭikā). (5)

When Lord Ram saw Sumantra coming, he welcomed him and showed him the same respect that he would have extended to his own father (king Dasrath) if he had visited the residence of his son². (6)

[Note—¹Remember: Sumantra was a responsible minister of the kingdom, and so it was incumbent upon him not to create panic in the city; he did not wish to spread rumours and create a tumult as it would have a disastrous consequences. There was a great responsibility on his shoulders, he had to keep many things in mind when taking any decision on any matter, and he had to act calmly, maintain his presence of mind, and act in a most wise and prudent way even during the greatest of adversities and wildest of calamities in order to properly administer the affairs of the mighty kingdom

of Ayodhya. Sumantra could not afford to allow emotions and sentiments to take hold of his mind.

²There were two senior persons in the hierarchy of the kingdom who were shown great respect—one was sage Vasistha, the royal priest, and the other was Sumantra, the chief minister and head of the council of advisors. Both were aged and illustrious persons, and everyone in the city revered them and obeyed their command.]

निरखि बदनू कहि भूप रजाई । रघुकुलदीपहि चलेउ लेवाई ॥ ७ ॥
रामु कुभाँति सचिव सँग जाहीं । देखि लोग जहँ तहँ बिलखाहीं ॥ ८ ॥

nirakhi badanu kahi bhūpa rajāī. raghukuladīpahi calē'u lēvāī. 7.
rāmu kubhām̐ti saciva sam̐ga jāhīm̐. dēkhi lōga jaham̐ taham̐ bilakhāhīm̐. 8.

Sumantra looked at Lord Ram intently (to discern if there were any signs of uneasiness on the Lord's face, and finding that there were none, Sumantra felt a little bit assured and comforted).

[After initial formalities—] Sumantra conveyed to the Lord the command of the king, summoning the Lord to present himself before the king.

Then he took Lord Ram, who was like a lighted lamp (i.e. most illustrious and famous) in the race of kings belonging to the family of the ancient king Raghu (raghukuladīpaka), along with him (as he went back to where Dasrath was). (7)

The sight of Lord Ram hurrying along urgently with Sumantra sent alarm bells ringing amongst the citizens, making them perplexed and confused, for it was obvious that something was ominously serious.

This sight caused immense consternation and distress to the citizens who began to wail and lament at the very thought of an impending misfortune that this sight clearly hinted at¹. (8)

[Note—¹First, king Dasrath was too late in getting up in the morning; second, Sumantra's own face and behaviour at the time of his emerging from the palace after meeting the king were somber and grave, and then he had tried to deflect the citizens' queries when they had asked him if everything was alright, and third, now the crowd saw that Sumantra and Lord Ram were hurrying towards the king's palace with uneasiness writ large on their faces. No one was so fool as not to decipher that these signals obvious meant that there was something seriously amiss.

The most common talk doing the rounds was concerned with the king's health, for the citizens presumed that the king had taken seriously ill during the night, and so Lord Ram was summoned urgently to meet his ailing father. But however, no one could guess that a bigger calamity was to descend upon them very soon, for at that point of time no one could imagine, even in the wildest of their nightmares, that Lord Ram would be sent to the forest on the instructions of his father who, just a day ago, was all set to give the crown to him.]

दो०. जाइ दीख रघुबंसमनि नरपति निपट कुसाजु।

सहमि परेउ लखि सिंघिनिहि मनहुँ बृद्ध गजराजु ॥ ३९ ॥

dōhā.

jā'i dīkha raghubansamani narapati nipāṭa kusāju.

sahami parē'u lakhi siṅghinihi manahum' br̥d'dha gajarāju. 39.

When Lord Ram, who was like a gem in king Raghu's race (raghubansamani), reached king (Dasrath), he found the latter in a dismal condition, lying on the ground in a very pitiable and distressed state, as if an old and infirm king of elephants (br̥d'dha gajarāju) was so terrified by the sight of a wild lioness that he falls down swooning out of terror. (Doha no. 39)

[Note—Here, king Dasrath is like the 'old and infirm king of elephants', and Kaikeyi, with her angry countenance and agitated manners, is like the 'wild lioness' ready to attack and kill the poor elephant. Like the elephant who feels helpless against the powerful and bloodthirsty lioness, Dasrath too felt helpless against Kaikeyi who showed no sign of pity, mercy or compassion at the miserable condition of her husband.]

चौ०. सूखहिं अधर जरइ सबु अंगू । मनहुँ दीन मनिहीन भूअंगू ॥ १ ॥

सरुष समीप दीखि कैकेई । मानहुँ मीचु घरीं गनि लेई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sūkhahim adhara jara'i sabu aṅgū. manahum' dīna manihīna bhū'aṅgū. 1.

saruṣa samīpa dīkhi kaikēī. mānahum' mīcu gharīṁ gani lēī. 2.

[Lord Ram observed that the—] King Dasrath's lips were parched dry; his whole body was hot (as if he was suffering from high fever). His miserable condition resembled that of a serpent who has lost his 'Mani' (because without this 'mani', the serpent's life is like that of a blind man's)¹. (1)

Nearby was Kaikeyi seething with anger, as if she was personified Death itself, waiting with a menace on its face as it was waiting for the time to come when it would devour its prey (i.e. kill the king)². (2)

[Note—¹The "Mani" is a sac filled with a fluorescent secretion from a special type of glands on the skin of a species of serpents. This sac gives out light; so when the serpent comes out of its hole during the night, foraging for food, it is believed that the light from this secretion helps the serpent to see its prey. Without this sac, which looks like an illuminated 'gem', a "Mani", the serpent is virtually blind, and consequently it would die of hunger, sooner or later, as it cannot see its prey.

This metaphor is apt here, because Dasrath would soon die when he is separated from Lord Ram; the king has himself prophesized this—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 33 herein above.

²In this imagery, Kaikeyi is like the God of Death who was very angry because he had to wait for the time to come to kill his victim, who in this case is king Dasrath.

The idea is that Kaikeyi was very fidgety, and each passing moment seemed to be an hour for her. She was extremely agitated and wrathful, growling under her breath as she virtually spewed fire and brimstone at her husband. She was eager to let the cat out of the bag, and could not wait for the king ordering Lord Ram to go to the forest and announce that Bharat would ascend the throne.]

करुनामय मृदु राम सुभाऊ । प्रथम दीख दुख सुना न काऊ ॥ ३ ॥
तदपि धीर धरि समउ बिचारी । पूँछी मधुर बचन महतारी ॥ ४ ॥
मोहि कहु मातु तात दुख कारन । करिअ जतन जेहिं होइ निवारन ॥ ५ ॥

karunāmaya mṛdu rāma subhā'ū. prathama dīkha dukhu sunā na kā'ū. 3.
tadapi dhīra dhari sama'u bicārī. pūm̐chī madhura bacana mahatārī. 4.
mōhi kahu mātu tāta dukha kārana. kari'a jatana jēhim hō'i nivārana. 5.

Lord Ram was completely taken aback and shocked, for he had a very compassionate and merciful nature that made him move at the misery of others¹, and also because it was the first time in his life that he was witnessing such scenes of grief and distress as he had never ever heard of this kind of situation earlier². (3)

Still, Lord Ram remained calm and kept his composure; he showed courage and forbearance in the face of adversity, and turned to Kaikeyi to address her most politely. (4)

He asked Kaikeyi: 'Mother, please tell me what has caused my dear father () so much distress and grief, and I shall endeavour to find a means to eliminate it.' (5)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 85.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 201.]

सुनहु राम सबु कारन एहू । राजहि तुम्ह पर बहुत सनेहू ॥ ६ ॥
देन कहेन्हि मोहि दुइ बरदाना । मागेउँ जो कछु मोहि सोहाना ॥ ७ ॥
सो सुनि भयउ भूष उर सोचू । छाड़ि न सकहिं तुम्हार सँकोचू ॥ ८ ॥

sunahu rāma sabu kārana ēhū. rājahi tumha para bahuta sanēhū. 6.
dēna kahēnhi mōhi du'i baradānā. māgē'um̐ jō kachu mōhi sōhānā. 7.
sō suni bhaya'u bhūpa ura sōcū. chāḍi na sakahim tumhāra sam̐kōcū. 8.

[Kaikeyi was waiting for this opportunity. So she replied—] 'Listen Ram; the only reason why the king is so much tormented, seems to be exceedingly mentally vexed and overcome with grief is that he has an excess of affection for thee. (6)

See what actually happened. He hadst promised me that he wouldst grant me two wishes, and insisted that I may ask him whatever pleased me. (7)

[So, I told him what I wanted to have.] No sooner he heard what I wished to have, but he was immediately stricken with grief, becoming pensive as he began to lament and wail gravely. He is unable to reconcile himself and overcome his hesitation in fulfilling the two words of honour he had granted me because of thee, as thou art directly concerned with it and affected by it.

[Forsooth, it is on thy account that the king is so distressed, for he loveth thee so much that he does naught wot what he ought to do. Therefore, if thou sincerely wish to remove the cause of his misery and vexation, then comest forward and volunteer to obey. The king is reluctant to tell thee himself about my desire as he thinkest it would hurt thee, but if you wilt volunteer to willingly obey it, then it wouldst help him overcome his dilemma, which in turn wouldst remove the cause of all this gloom and misery that has engulfed him like a dark cloud surrounding him from all sides, making him so doleful.]’ (8)

दो०. सुत सनेहु इत बचनु उत संकट परेउ नरेसु ।
सकहु त आयसु धरहु सिर मेटहु कठिन कलेसु ॥ ४० ॥

dōhā.

suta sanēhu ita bacanu uta saṅkaṭa parē'u narēsu.
sakahu ta āyasu dharahu sira mēṭahu kaṭhina kalēsu. 40.

[Kaikeyi continued—] ‘On the one hand is his love for his dear son (that is you), and on the other hand is the (horrifying) prospect of breaking or going back on his words of honour (as he fears that it would be a greatly dishonourable thing for him to do).

This indeed is the great dilemma that the king faces (for he does not know what to do in this situation). So therefore, if thy art ready to obey the command of thy father, then the cause of this dilemma wouldst be automatically removed, and this volunteering by thee wouldst eliminate the horrible grief and distress that he faces at present.’ (Doha no. 40)

चौ०. निधरक बैठि कहइ कटु बानी । सुनत कठिनता अति अकुलानी ॥ १ ॥
जीभ कमान बचन सर नाना । मनहुँ महिप मृदु लच्छ समाना ॥ २ ॥
जनु कठोरपनु धरें सरीरू । सिखइ धनुषबिद्या बर बीरू ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

nidharaka baiṭhi kaha'i kaṭu bānī. sunata kaṭhinatā ati akulānī. 1.
jībha kamāna bacana sara nānā. manahum' mahipa mṛdu laccha samānā. 2.
janu kaṭhōrapanu dharēm sarīrū. sikha'i dhanuṣabidyā bara bīrū. 3.

Kaikeyi had become so callous, rude and wrathful that she threw all decency and etiquettes to the wind and sat down with a defiant mood and a grimace on her face after speaking pungent words filled with caustic remarks and sarcasm that would put

to shame even a personified form of rudeness, and make cruelty itself wince in horror. (1)

She had used her tongue as a bow from which she shot piercing arrows, symbolised by her insensitive words and remarks that were directed at the king (Dasrath)¹ for she treated him as a soft target that was vulnerable to her ruthlessness. (2)

It appeared like the case of evil virtues of cruelty and wrath having taken a physical form in the person of Kaikeyi and practicing archery, and honing their skills in the use of bow and arrow by making Dasrath as the target for this practice. (3)

[Note—¹Whatever Kaikeyi had said to Lord Ram in the previous verses was actually directed at her husband, king Dasrath, who lay on the ground near her. To wit, even while she spoke to the Lord, she had her fiery eyes fixed on her grieving husband, for her wrath was directed not at Lord Ram but at her husband, king Dasrath, for daring to take a decision to anoint Lord Ram on the throne without consulting her.

Further, since Dasrath lay quiet and seemingly helpless on the ground, she felt that she has had an upper hand over him, that she had subdued him into surrendering before her, and that her suspicion that the king and his senior wife Kaushalya were hatching a conspiracy against her was not imaginary but had substance in it. So, the king's silence and inability to oppose her and refute her outrageous charges infuriated her all the more, and she was so agitated with vengeance and anger that not only her heart beat furiously but she was also so lost for more vicious words that she sat down heavily in frustration for want of a more vitriolic remark that she could direct against the king.]

सबु प्रसंगु रघुपतिहि सुनाई । बैठि मनहुँ तनु धरि निठुराई ॥ ४ ॥
मन मुसुकाइ भानुकुल भानू । रामु सहज आनंद निधानू ॥ ५ ॥

sabu prasaṅgu raghupatihi sunāī. baiṭhi manahum̐ tanu dhari niṭhurāī. 4.
mana musukāī bhānukula bhānū. rāmu sahaja ānanda nidhānū. 5.

After narrating the whole incidence to Lord Ram (as briefly described in Doha no. 40 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it herein above), Kaikeyi sat down as if she was a personified form of stubbornness and heartlessness. (4)

Lord Ram, who was like a sun in the Solar Race (i.e. who was the most exalted, illustrious and glorious in the line of kings of the Solar Race), smiled when he heard what Kaikeyi had to say¹, for the Lord was, by his inherent nature, an abode and a fountain of happiness, joy and bliss². (5)

[Note—¹There are other occasions in the story of Ram Charit Manas where we come across incidents where we read that Lord Ram would quietly smile in a subtle way—apropos: (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 216; (b) Ayodhya Kand, (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 101; (iii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 128; (c) Aranya Kand, (iv) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 31; (d) Kishkindha Kand, (v) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes

Doha no. 21; (vi) Sundar Kand, (vi) Doha no. 59; (vii) Lanka Kand, (vii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 2; (viii) Doha no. 12-b.

In all these occasions, Lord Ram had smiled softly to indicate that he was amused by the situation.

²To wit, no amount of worldly problems, no amount of fear arising from worries and troubles, would ever upset him, for Lord Ram was a personified form of bliss, tranquility, beatitude and happiness, as well as the virtues of fortitude, forbearance and equanimity. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 219.]

बोले बचन बिगत सब दूषन । मृदु मंजुल जनु बाग बिभूषन ॥ ६ ॥
 सुनु जननी सोइ सुतु बड़भागी । जो पितु मातु बचन अनुरागी ॥ ७ ॥
 तनय मातु पितु तोषनिहारा । दुर्लभ जननि सकल संसारा ॥ ८ ॥

bōlē bacana bigata saba dūṣana. mr̥du maṇjula janu bāga bibhūṣana. 6.
 sunu janani sō'i sutu baṛabhāgī. jō pitu mātu bacana anurāgī. 7.
 tanaya mātu pitu tōṣanihārā. durlabha janani sakala sansārā. 8.

Finally, Lord Ram spoke sweetly; he used pleasant words that had no trace of any sort of anger, rancour or ill-will in them. The Lord's words were so nice to hear and spoken with so much courtesy that they symbolised ornaments (i.e. the best of qualities) of the deity of speech for their acceptability, sweetness and pleasant nature. (6)

Lord Ram said to Kaikeyi: 'Mother, listen. That son is very blessed, fortunate and worthy of praise who would obey (or follow) the words (commands, instructions) of his parents. (7)

Verily indeed, in all sooth and without gainsay, a son who would keep his parents contented and happy is very rare and difficult to find in this world.¹ (8)

[Note—¹To wit, therefore, if a son gets a chance to fulfill the wishes of his parent, he ought to consider himself very lucky and blessed, and so he must do his best to keep his parents happy and contented. This being the maxim, say then, why would I not obey both your as well as my father's commands?]

दो०. मुनिगन मिलनु बिसेषि बन सबहि भाँति हित मोर ।
 तेहि महँ पितु आयसु बहुरि संमत जननी तोर ॥ ४१ ॥

dōhā.

munigana milanu bisēṣi bana sabahi bhām̐ti hita mōra.
 tēhi maham̐ pitu āyasu bahuri sammata janani tōra. 41.

Lord Ram continued: 'In the forest I will get a rare chance, a privilege rather, to meet great sages, hermits and ascetics. Hence, going to the forest serves me well; I shall

have the chance to get their blessings. So therefore, it is for my own good in every possible way.

In addition to this privilege, I will get the reward of obeying my father, with an added bonus that in all this I have the consent of my mother (i.e. you). [Hence, there is no problem for me to go to the forest; I will rather gladly, willingly and cheerfully do so.]¹ (Doha no. 41)

[Note—¹We have read in Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes this Doha no. 41 that Kaikeyi told Lord Ram the details of what had transpired in his absence, and how she had taken a word of honour from king Dasrath that the Lord would have to go to the forest for fourteen years, and that his brother Bharat was to be anointed as the Prince-Regent in his place. This is how Lord Ram came to know that he is expected to head for the forest. He shows no shock or anger at his banishment to the wilds, as well as the sudden disinheritance of his rights to the crown of the kingdom for no fault of his.

Let us not forget that Lord Ram was not an ordinary prince born to rule a kingdom, but he was a manifestation of the Supreme Being who had come down to earth with a purpose, and that purpose could only be fulfilled if he went to the forest and then to Lanka, first to bless the countless sages and other spiritual seekers who live in the wilds to do Tapa (penances) so that they can attain beatitude, deliverance and salvation from this world, and secondly, to eliminate the scourge of the demons so that the creatures in this world could live in peace. These twin objectives could only be accomplished if Lord Ram goes to the forest.

Hence, when this chance came, there was no question of him become upset; rather he welcomed it with open arms.]

चौ०. भरतु प्रानप्रिय पावहिं राजू । बिधि सब बिधि मोहि सनमुख आजू ॥ १ ॥

जौं न जाउँ बन ऐसेहु काजा । प्रथम गनिअ मोहि मूढ़ समाजा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

bharatu prānapriya pāvahiṁ rājū. bidhi saba bidhi mōhi sanamukha ājū. 1.
jauṁ na jā'um̐ bana aisēhu kājā. prathama gani'a mōhi mūṛha samājā. 2.

Lord Ram said further: 'Let Bharat, who is as dear to me as my own life¹, get the throne², and let it happen so that he ascends the throne with full ceremonies and honour in my presence today³. (1)

Verily indeed, forsooth and without gainsay, if I do not proceed to the forest for such an auspicious and honourable objective, then I ought to be counted as the first one in a list of fools and stupid fellows.

[To wit, I am very happy to go to the forest if this makes my father overcome his dilemma and vexation, if it makes my mother Kaikeyi happy, and if it helps to make my dear brother Bharat ascend the crown after I relinquish my rights and claims to it. There is nothing more that would make me happy.]' (2)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 7; (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 205; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 3, 6 and 8 that precede Doha no. 208.

²Kaikeyi has told Lord Ram that king Dasrath was in a dilemma that has vexed him and is the cause of all his sufferings. The reason is that after promising her that he would honour her two wishes, he suddenly was left in the lurch when he found out, to his utter dismay, that she wanted to send Lord Ram to the forest, and appoint her own son Bharat to the throne instead*1. Since the king loved the Lord too much, the very thought that he would have to send his beloved son far away from him, to suffer in the hostile environment of the forest, had pushed him over the brink, making him sick with sorrow and grief*3. Therefore, it was now up to Lord Ram to accept going to the forest in order to remove the king's vexation and give him peace*2, as well as to pave the way for Bharat's ascension to the throne, for it was not possible to have two persons on the same throne*4.

{*1Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 29.

*2Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 40 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede it.

*3Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 33; (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 40.

*4Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 35.}

This is why Lord Ram expressed his willingness and happiness to go to the forest first so that the primary cause of his father's agony was taken care of, and then he gives his assent to Bharat's anointment to the throne to remove all doubts in this respect too, that he may be unhappy by his removal and placing his brother on the throne instead.

King Dasrath, meanwhile, was hearing all this. When he heard Lord Ram expressing his willingness to go to the forest and giving his approval for Bharat's ascension, the king lost all hopes. Remember: he had tried his best to reassure himself that such a preposterous set of things won't actually happen, and he had fervently hope that Lord Ram is not informed about this development. But unfortunately for him, all that hope came dashing down. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 37.}

³By saying that "let Bharat ascend the throne today itself in my presence", Lord Ram means to say that he would be very much pleased and enjoy witnessing Bharat being crowned on the throne immediately, before he goes to the forest, for he was already reluctant to accept the crown as its sole heir, as he felt that it would be improper for him to accept it when all the brothers should have equal right over it. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 10.}]

सेवहिं अरँडु कलपतरु त्यागी । परिहरि अमृत लेहिं बिषु मागी ॥ ३ ॥

तेउ न पाइ अस समउ चुकाहीं । देखु बिचारि मातु मन माहीं ॥ ४ ॥

sēvahim aramṇḍu kalapataru tyāgī. parihari amṛta lēhim biṣu māgī. 3.
tē'u na pā'i asā sama'u cukāhīm. dēkhu bicāri mātu mana māhīm. 4.

'Mother', said Lord Ram, 'If I do not go to the forest on this occasion, then my situation would be like a foolish person who would abandon the chance to nurture

(nourish; water; take care of) the all wish-fulfilling evergreen tree called the ‘Kalpa Taru’ (kalapataru), and instead prefer to nourish a castor-oil plant (aramḍu)¹.

Nay, I shall be as dumb and stupid as a person who discards Amrit (the ambrosia of life), and prefers to ask for poison instead². (3)

Verily, even duds and blockheads as mentioned above won’t like to miss such a chance as this if they are fortunate enough ever to have it.

So, oh mother, think over the matter in your heart and realize my eagerness and sincerity to obey what my parents want (because by obeying my parents I shall get an opportunity to gain immense merit and good fame, while refusal would mean nothing but a bad name which would bring infamy and discredit to me)³.’ (4)

[Note—¹The Kalpa Taru is a legendary tree of the gods that is believed to possess mystical powers for it can provide for all the needs of a person, while the castor oil plant is no match for it. The fruit of the Kalpa Tree would fulfill all the wishes of the person who nurtures this tree, while the fruit of the castor oil plant has no value. Hence, a person who prefers to water and serve a castor oil plant when he is given an option to serve a Kalpa Tree if he wishes to do so, is surely a dumb fool.

²Similarly, a person who barter a cup of nectar for a cup of poison would never be called wise and in his senses.

³Lord Ram means that even such people who are so stupid and dumb that they would prefer having castor oil plant instead of the all wish-fulfilling Kalpa Tree, or who accept a cup of poison and throw away another cup of nectar, would nevertheless have at least a rudimentary level of intelligence and wisdom that they should not abandon the chance to get good name and fame if it comes to them so easily by the simple device of obeying their parents. So therefore, if that opportunity has presented itself to the Lord, is he dumber and more stupid than the persons described here to refuse to accept it?

Nothing doing; he is eager to embrace such an opportunity with open arms, a gladdened heart, and a cheerful mind, with zeal and enthusiasm.

Lord Ram assured Kaikeyi that he has no regret to go to the forest; that he is not at all against Bharat ascending the throne; that he is not sorry but very happy at the development; and that is no reason why king Dasrath should lament, grieve and regret so much (refer verse nos. 5-6 herein below)—for going to the forest is a blessing for him rather than a curse, and he is most willing to go there very cheerfully.]

अंब एक दुखु मोहि बिसेषी । निपट बिकल नरनायकु देखी ॥ ५ ॥

थोरिहिं बात पितहि दुख भारी । होति प्रतीति न मोहि महतारी ॥ ६ ॥

amba ēka dukhu mōhi bisēṣī. nipaṭa bikala naranāyaku dēkhī. 5.
thōrihiṃ bāta pitahi dukha bhārī. hōti pratīti na mōhi mahatārī. 6.

The Lord said, ‘Howbeit, the only thing that maketh me very sad is to see the king (my father Dasrath) in such a miserable and dire condition on this account, for it is not so serious an issue that shouldst make him so pitiful, distraught and agonized. (5)

Oh mother, I can't believe that my father wouldst suffer so much for such a trifling and inconsequential issue. [To wit, surely there ought to be some thing greater and graver than what meets the eye which is worrying him so much, and weighing heavily on his conscience.]¹ (6)

[Note—¹What could be that matter? Well, we, the readers, are already acquainted with it—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 31—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precede Doha no. 33; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 34.

Dasrath clearly says that he has no problems in anointing Bharat on the throne, that he loves Lord Ram and Bharat equally, that he was just following established traditions wherein the eldest son of a king ascends the throne while deciding to appoint Lord Ram as his heir. The only thing that makes him so distressed is that he won't be able to survive if he is separated from the Lord, which is certain to happen if the Lord is sent to the forest.

What was that factor which was weighing so much on Dasrath's conscience? It was that Lord Ram was not at fault at all; the Lord was of a most compassionate and loving nature, who offended none, who harmed none. So therefore, why should he be punished by being banished to the forest? This was the issue that filled Dasrath with intense regret. Dasrath wondered what answer he would give to his subjects when they confront him with the question as to the logic behind his sending Lord Ram to the forest, for the citizens loved the Lord dearly, and everyone wanted him to be their next king. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 1; (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 2—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 3; and (iii) Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 32.}]

राउ धीर गुन उदधि अगाधू । भा मोहि तें कछु बड़ अपराधू ॥ ७ ॥

जातें मोहि न कहत कछु राऊ । मोरि सपथ तोहि कहु सतिभाऊ ॥ ८ ॥

rā'u dhīra guna udadhi agādhū. bhā mōhi tēm kachu barā aparādhū. 7.
jātēm mōhi na kahata kachu rā'ū. mōri sapatha tōhi kahu satibhā'ū. 8.

'The king is of a very tolerant, forbearing and resilient nature; he is an ocean of immense good virtues. So it appears to me that certainly I have committed some grave mistake that has caused so much grief to him. (7)

This is the probable reason why the king is not speaking to me¹. So therefore, mother, I prithee to please tell me the truth of the matter.' (8)

[Note—¹The king was so shocked that he lay motionless on the ground. He has not spoken to Sumantra either. All the speaking has been done by Kaikeyi till now. {Refer: (i) Doha no. 36; (ii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 38 herein above, and (iii) Doha no. 43 herein below.}]

दो०. सहज सरल रघुबर बचन कुमति कुटिल करि जान ।

चलइ जोंक जल बक्रगति जद्यपि सलिलु समान ॥ ४२ ॥

dōhā.

sahaja sarala raghubara bacana kumati kuṭila kari jāna.
cala'i jōnka jala bakragati jadyapi salilu samāna. 42.

Though Lord Ram, who was the most exalted in king Raghu's race (raghubara), spoke innocently and without any deceit in his heart, but Kaikeyi, being herself of a crooked nature and a wicked heart who saw everything through a lens of deceit and pretension, thought that the Lord was pretending innocence and humility, as well as willingness to obey his father's command (to go to the forest and let Bharat ascend the throne)¹.

She was like a leech who is accustomed to move with a twist and in an oblique manner though the water where it moves is calm and its surface is smooth². (Doha no. 42)

[Note—¹Kaikeyi's mind was biased against Lord Ram. She had firmly believed that Kaushalya, the (biological) mother of Lord Ram, and Dasrath had together hatched a conspiracy against her, and since Lord Ram was the king's favourite son it is logical to conclude that he was acquainted with the plan. So, when the Lord told her that he was willing to go to the forest and see Bharat appointed on the throne in his stead, and then enquired from her the real reason of Dasrath's grief, she felt he was pretending innocence and had some sinister design in his mind.

The idea is that when a person becomes biased against anyone, his mind becomes so conditioned that it would always see the negative side of anything the other person says or does.

²A leech always moves in a crooked fashion; it turns left and right during its forward motion, never moving in a straight line. This analogy is cited here to indicate how a crooked person thinks and behaves. He never would talk straight, and he never would deal honestly with another person. Indeed, such persons are as dangerous as the blood-suckling leech.]

चौ०. रहसी रानि राम रुख पाई । बोली कपट सनेहु जनाई ॥ १ ॥

सपथ तुम्हार भरत कै आना । हेतु न दूसर में कछु जाना ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

rahasī rāni rāma rukha pā'ī. bōlī kapaṭa sanēhu janā'ī. 1.

sapatha tumhāra bharata kai ānā. hētu na dūsara maiṁ kachu jānā. 2.

When the queen (i.e. Kaikeyi) observed the response of Lord Ram (that he was willing to accept the orders of his father to go to the forest, and also that he has no problems in Bharat ascending the throne), she felt glad and satisfied.

Then she spoke to Lord Ram with an apparent affection in her voice, albeit the sweetness in her words was fictitious as she was only pretending to be courteous¹. (1)

Kaikeyi responded to Lord Ram's enquiry as follows: 'I say on oath and swear in your name and that of my son Bharat's name that I am unaware of any other reason (except the one which I have already told you²) that has thrown the king into such a mental turmoil. (2)

[Note—¹She was skilled in pretensions and a false show of affection. She had employed it while talking with her husband too—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 26; (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 27.

²Kaikeyi was referring to what she had already told Lord Ram when he had enquired from her as to the reason why the king lay on the ground in a distressed state as narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 40 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede it.]

तुम्ह अपराध जोगु नहिं ताता । जननी जनक बंधु सुखदाता ॥ ३ ॥

राम सत्य सबु जो कछु कहहू । तुम्ह पितु मातु बचन रत अहहू ॥ ४ ॥

tumha aparādha jōgu nahim tātā. jananī janaka bandhu sukhadātā. 3.
rāma satya sabu jō kachu kahahū. tumha pitu mātū bacana rata ahahū. 4.

My dear (tātā), thou ought naught regret that thy hadst committed some mistake that hast caused so much distress to the king, for in all sooth thou art hardly able to offend anyone, least of all thine parents and brothers to whom thou gives much joy and happiness so much so that they art gladdened in their hearts by thy behaviour¹. (3)

Verily indeed, what thou havest said just now is true and honestly spoken by thee, for in all sooth thou art very obedient towards thy parents and diligent in keeping their words (as thy hast affirmed thyself)². (4)

[Note—¹Kaikeyi's words are seemingly sweet, courteous and pleasant to hear, but the hidden sarcasm and taunt in them is very evident. She is teasing Lord Ram for his statement that he was willing to go to the forest at his parent's command, and that he would be very glad if Bharat ascends the throne right away. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 41—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 42.}

She wonders if what Lord Ram says is true, or is it a pretension on the part of the Lord—for she was skeptical and prejudiced against the Lord, and even honest words spoken by him seemed to be spoken with a crooked intention as far as she was concerned—see Doha no. 42 herein above.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 41.]

पितहि बुझाइ कहहु बलि सोई । चौथेंपन जेहिं अजसु न होई ॥ ५ ॥

तुम्ह सम सुअन सुकृत जेहिं दीन्हे । उचित न तासु निरादरु कीन्हे ॥ ६ ॥

pitahi bujhā'i kahahu bali sō'ī. cauthēmpāna jēhim ājasu na hō'ī. 5.
tumha sama su'ana sukr̥ta jēhim dīnhē. ucita na tāsū nirādaru kīnhē. 6.

Now, comest forward and advise thy father accordingly, that he ought to act wisely and doth naught do aught that wouldst bring great infamy upon him in his old age¹. (5)

Let him beware that the merits and the good virtues that he possesses (such as being ever so truthful to his words), and which have entitled him to be blessed with a glorious son like thee—it wouldst be highly improper and very impudent for him to show disregard to them and their auspicious rewards (by rescinding on his words of honour just because he loves thee too much).² (6)

[Note—¹One wonders at the heartless and cruel nature of Kaikeyi; how emotionless and devoid of pity she was. Now she wants Lord Ram himself to tell his father to let him go to the forest. It's like asking a son to tie the knot around the neck of his father who stands on the scaffolding to be hanged, and then to pull the lever to dangle him in air!

The infamy she talks about is that if Dasrath rescinds on his words and refuses to oblige her by sending Lord Ram to the forest, it will bring him bad reputation for having broken his own promise. So now she wants Lord Ram to tell Dasrath that he insists on going to the forest on his own initiative, on his own free will, without any coercion. The king is presently lying on the ground, apparently only half conscious of his surroundings. So, this wicked woman does not want to take any risk that when the king gains full consciousness and sees Lord Ram standing near, he may get encouraged to say 'no' to her because he would now find support in his son.

²Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 310; (ii) Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 173 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede it.

This is a veiled threat to Lord Ram as well—that he must not advise any other thing to his father except what Kaikeyi had demanded from him, and has also extracted his consent for it, because if he does so, he will be held guilty of making his father infamous for having broken his own vows, something that has not been done by any other member of the illustrious family descending from king Raghu. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 28.}]

लागहिं कुमुख बचन सुभ कैसे । मगहँ गयादिक तीरथ जैसे ॥ ७ ॥
रामहि मातु बचन सब भाए । जिमि सुरसरि गत सलिल सुहाए ॥ ८ ॥

lāgahim kumukha bacana subha kaisē. magaham' gayādika tīratha jaisē. 7.
rāmahi mātū bacana saba bhā'ē. jimi surasari gata salila suhā'ē. 8.

These outwardly sweetly spoken words spoken from the vile and detestable mouth of Kaikeyi were like the irony of such holy pilgrim places as Gaya etc. that adorn the otherwise cursed land known as Magadha¹. (7)

Lord Ram appreciated his mother's (i.e. Kaikeyi's)² words, although they had come from an evil person, just like the case of impure and dirty water becoming holy and purified if it is mixed in the holy water of river Ganges³. (8)

[Note—¹It is believed that the area known as 'Magadha' in the south of the state of Bihar in India is a cursed place; for anyone who dies here seldom finds deliverance. But the irony is that the same area has some of the highly respected pilgrim places, one such being 'Gaya', where people go to do rituals so that the soul of their dead ancestors are granted peace and deliverance.

Similarly, though Kaikeyi's mouth was like that of a serpent or the vent of a volcano, yet the words she spoke were very sweet and pleasant to hear.

²Lord Ram was so polite and affectionate by nature that he has himself addressed Kaikeyi with the word "Mother"—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 41.

³River Ganges is a holy river; but all sorts of water from different sources fall into it during its course through the plains. Yet, the holiness of Ganges is not compromised, and therefore all water that merges with the water of Ganges become as holy as the primary water of the river.

Here it means that though Kaikeyi was vile and evil by nature, yet what she said would, in the long term, serve the purpose for which Lord Ram had descended on earth—i.e. his going to the forest to bless the countless sages doing penances there, and also to eliminate the cruel demons. Hence, these words served a divine cause, a holy purpose.]

दो०. गइ मुरुछा रामहि सुमिरि नृप फिरि करवट लीन्ह ।
सचिव राम आगमन कहि बिनय समय सम कीन्ह ॥ ४३ ॥

dōhā.

ga'i muruchā rāmahī sumiri nr̥pa phiri karavaṭa līnha.
saciva rāma āgamana kahi binaya samaya sama kīnha. 43.

Meanwhile, king Dasrath regained his consciousness, muttered the name of Lord Ram¹, and turned over on his side.

When Sumantra observed that the king had become conscious, he greeted him and told him that Lord Ram has arrived as ordered². (Doha no. 43)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 37; (ii) Doha no. 38.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 37; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 39.]

चौ०. अवनिप अकनि रामु पगु धारे । धरि धीरजु तब नयन उघारे ॥ १ ॥
सचिवँ सँभारि राउ बैठारे । चरन परत नृप रामु निहारे ॥ २ ॥

caupā'ī.

avanipa akani rāmu pagu dhārē. dhari dhīraju taba nayana ughārē. 1.
sacivam̐ sambhāri rā'u baiṭhārē. carana parata nṛpa rāmu nihārē. 2.

When the distraught king heard that Lord Ram has come (and is present before him)¹, he recovered himself, (sighed, gathered courage) and opened his eyes. (1)

The chief minister (Sumantra) politely helped the king to sit up. The king, meanwhile, affectionately observed that Lord Ram was falling at his feet (to pay respects to him). (2)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 43 herein above.]

लिए सनेह बिकल उर लाई । गै मनि मनहुँ फनिक फिरि पाई ॥ ३ ॥
रामहि चितइ रहेउ नरनाहू । चला बिलोचन बारि प्रबाहू ॥ ४ ॥

li'ē sanēha bikala ura lā'ī. gai mani manahum̐ phanika phiri pā'ī. 3.
rāmahi cita'i rahē'u naranāhū. calā bilōcana bāri prabāhū. 4.

No sooner did Dasrath see Lord Ram prostrating before him than he lovingly clasped the Lord to his bosom, as if a serpent (who was about to die of grief at the loss of his precious 'Mani') has found his lost 'Mani' once again¹. (3)

The king kept on looking at Lord Ram affectionately, even as tears rolled down his eyes in a continuous stream. (4)

[Note—¹King Dasrath has previously asserted that he cannot live without Lord Ram just like a serpent can't survive without his 'Mani'—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 33. As has already been explained earlier, the 'Mani' is a luminescent sac filled with some secretion from the glands of the skin on the hood of a species of serpents. The serpent would die of hunger if it loses this sac, because the serpent forages for food in the night in the light of this sac and becomes blind in its absence.

So, king Dasrath felt that he has got a new lease of life when he saw his beloved son Lord Ram before him, for he had thought that he would never see the Lord again in his life.]

सोक बिबस कछु कहै न पारा । हृदयँ लगावत बारहिं बारा ॥ ५ ॥
बिधिहि मनाव राउ मन माहीं । जेहिं रघुनाथ न कानन जाहीं ॥ ६ ॥

sōka bibasa kachu kahai na pārā. hṛdayam̐ lagāvata bārahim̐ bārā. 5.
bidhihi manāva rā'u mana māhīm̐. jēhīm̐ raghunātha na kānana jāhīm̐. 6.

The king was so overwhelmed with emotions and overcome with grief that he could not utter a word (for his throat was choked and his tongue failed him), so he repeatedly embraced Lord Ram and clasped the latter to his bosom¹. (5)

Mentally, the king fervently prayed and appealed to the Creator (i.e. Brahma) to let it be so happen (or let it be so devised) that Lord Ram is prevented (or spared) from going to the forest. (6)

[Note—¹We can easily understand the poignancy of the situation, the immensity of the emotional stress and sadness of Dasrath's heart, and the mental turmoil and vexation that he underwent at that time. In such a situation, when a person is overwhelmed with emotions and grief overtakes him, his voice usually fails him; his mind stops functioning, and he would not know what to say or do. He would simply sob and silently grieve, but is so dumbfounded and numbed that he is unable to say a thing or think coherently.

Dasrath shook as if a fever has got hold of his body; he sighed and sobbed and wept; being unable to speak a word to Lord Ram the only alternative he could think of was to embrace the Lord and hold him close to his bosom. The word 'repeatedly' implies that each time the Lord attempted to move away, the king would hold his hand and pull him close, to clasp the Lord to his bosom, again and again.

The scene described here vividly depicts the miserable and pitiable condition of a father with his pent-up emotions and love for his beloved son whom he is not sure he would be able to see much longer.]

सुमिरि महेसहि कहइ निहोरी । बिनती सुनहु सदासिव मोरी ॥ ७ ॥
आसुतोष तुम्ह अवढर दानी । आरति हरहु दीन जनु जानी ॥ ८ ॥

sumiri mahēsahi kaha'i nihōrī. binatī sunahu sadāsiva mōrī. 7.
āsutōṣa tumha avaḍhara dānī. ārati harahu dīna janu jānī. 8.

He (Dasrath) invoked Lord Shiva and pleaded with him most earnestly: 'Oh the eternal Shiva; please be kind upon me to heed my prayers. (7)

Thou art known to become easily pleased (āsutōṣa), and thou art also a liberal and magnanimous granter of wishes (avaḍhara dānī).

So therefore, taking into consideration that I am most humble and in a pitiable condition, please eliminate my grief and the cause of mine sorrow.¹ (8)

[Note—¹What is the "cause of Dasrath's sorrow"? It is nothing else but the prospect of him being separated from Lord Ram if the latter goes to the forest. So, Dasrath asks Lord Shiva to prevent this from happening, just as he has prayed to the Creator (i.e. Brahma) just a moment ago—apropos: Chaupai line no. 6 herein above.]

दो०. तुम्ह प्रेरक सब के हृदयँ सो मति रामहि देहु ।
बचनु मोर तजि रहहिं घर परिहरि सीलु सनेहु ॥ ४४ ॥

dōhā.

tumha prēraḱa saba kē hṛdayam̐ sō mati rāmahi dēhu.
 bacanu mōra taji rahahim̐ ghara parihari sīlu sanēhu. 44.

Dasrath continues his appeal to Lord Shiva: ‘Oh Lord, thou art the one who inspires everyone to act in the way their hearts want them to act.

Hence, I request thee to devise a way that would motivate Lord Ram to disobey me, to defy my words and override them, by staying at home (instead of going to the forest)¹.’ (Doha no. 44)

[Note—¹Dasrath pleads to Lord Shiva: “Oh Lord! Thou livest in the subtle heart of all living beings, and from within thou wouldst motivate a person to do something that he does. So therefore, please inspire Lord Ram to defy me and refuse to go to the forest”.

It is such an irony and a paradoxical situation that king Dasrath on the one hand expects his son, the most honourable Lord Ram, to disobey his father and refuse to honour the latter’s words, while on the other hand he himself would not do the same thing by refusing to honour his own promises made to Kaikeyi.

It is such a contradictory position; and it is so incredulous or irrational for Dasrath to expect Lord Ram to do it. Was not Dasrath aware that Lord Ram too belonged to that illustrious family to which Dasrath himself belonged, and that, was it good and an honourable thing for a son to defy and disobey his father openly? Would that not be a grave sin in itself; would that not bring immense infamy and social criticism on Lord Ram? Would Lord Ram not have to bear the evil consequences of committing this kind of sin?

Had Dasrath forgotten that the reason why he himself does not want to rescind on his words was that it would bring immense bad name and dishonour to him and his family, and so is it not ridiculous for him to ask Lord Ram to commit a similar mistake and invite ignominy and dishonour upon himself?

In the Chaupai nos. 1-2 that follow herein below, we shall read that Dasrath prays to Lord Shiva that he was ready to get infamy, go to hell, and have all his merits neutralized, but requests Lord Shiva to make it so happen that he does not lose sight of Lord Ram. Well, come to think of it—if he was ready for all these things, then why couldn’t he himself just get up and tell Kaikeyi firmly: “Alack-a-day, oh thy wicked woman, thee wretched being, enough is enough! Ram is not going to the forest, be sure of it in thy wicked heart, and as far as thy threat to me that I wilt invite infamy for breaking mine words of honour given to thee, then to hell with thee and the blackmail thy havest subjected me to force me to make this absurd promise to thine pervert self. Shame to thee! Fie upon thine curst soul! I am ready for the consequences of breaking my promises; for it, I shalt suffer and not thee, so how does it worry and matter to thee when thy art not bothered that I wouldst die if Lord Ram is snatched away from me? If my death even does not move thy hardened heart, how wouldst it matter if I get infamy or naught?”

But the irony of the situation is that king Dasrath does not do it. It appears apparently that his courage to face his angry wife has failed him; it also is evident that irrespective of his saying that he is ready to go to hell and have all his life-long accumulation of merit made null and void as narrated in the next set of verses cited above, but he does not wish to do it himself and wishes instead to put the public blame on Lord Shiva and the creator Brahma.

This is the obvious reason therefore, why Lord Shiva did not pay heed to Dasrath’s prayers and ignored them, for the king was expecting Lord Ram to do a thing that he would not do himself. How could Lord Shiva, who revered Lord Ram

and worshipped him, ever agree that he would cause his beloved Lord to commit an error and do a dishonourable thing by disobeying his parents' wish?

Why, come to think of it—would it not have been very easy for Dasrath to find a simple solution and convenient way out of the sticky ground he has landed himself in by just declaring his words given to his wife were null and void, and giving a simple reason that he is taking his words back as it would do harm to the larger interest of the kingdom, and also because it was against probity and established norms that the eldest son should be debarred from ascending the throne, and is instead banished to the forest, even after a royal proclamation has been made regarding it, just due to the whims of a wicked woman. No one in his senses would have ever accused Dasrath of any wrongdoing if he did it.

Let us remember that this is the same Dasrath who had realized that it was the Supreme Being himself who has manifested himself as his son at the time news reached him that he has been blessed by four sons—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 193. But now he wails for Lord Ram and says he won't survive without him out of his deep love and attachment for the Lord, like any true devotee would.

Let us also not forget that when the Supreme Being revealed himself to bless king Manu and his wife Satrupa (who later became king Dasrath and queen Kaushalya respectively in their next life), at the time when the couple did Tapa (severe penances) to have a 'darshan' (divine sight) of the Lord, Manu had asked the Lord to bless him that his love and affection for the Lord should be so intense and deep that his life would be bound to and be dependent on the Lord as is the life of a serpent on its 'Mani', for the serpent dies without it—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precede Doha no. 151. Hence, it was Dasrath's long cherished desire that he should not live a moment without the Lord, and therefore there is no wonder he is behaving in the way he does at present.]

चौ०. अजसु होउ जग सुजसु नसाऊ । नरक परौं बरु सुरपुरु जाऊ ॥ १ ॥

सब दुख दुसह सहावहु मोही । लोचन ओट रामु जनि होंही ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

ajasu hō'u jaga sujasu nasā'ū. naraka paraum baru surapuru jā'ū. 1.
saba dukha dusaha sahāvahu mōhī. lōcana ōṭa rāmu jani hōnhī. 2.

[The distraught king Dasrath lamented and muttered to himself, while at the same time remembering Lord Shiva and continuing his prayers—]

'Let me have infamy and world-wide dishonour, let all my credit turn into discredit, let it also be that I may suffer in hell and heaven becomes inaccessible to me¹—(1)

Oh Lord (Shiva), give me as much sorrow and grief as thy want, but please do not make Ram go beyond my sight.' (2)

[Note—¹See a detailed note appended to Doha no. 44 herein above.]

अस मन गुनइ राउ नहिं बोला । पीपर पात सरिस मनु डोला ॥ ३ ॥

रघुपति पितहि प्रेमबस जानी । पुनि कछु कहिहि मातु अनुमानी ॥ ४ ॥
देस काल अवसर अनुसारी । बोले बचन बिनीत बिचारी ॥ ५ ॥

asa mana guna'i rā'u nahim bōlā. pīpara pāta sarisa manu dōlā. 3.
raghupati pitahi prēmabasa jānī. puni kachu kahihi mātu anumānī. 4.
dēsa kāla avasara anusārī. bōlē bacana binīta bicārī. 5.

In the aforesaid manner, the king made a silent but fervent appeal to Lord Shiva and the creator Brahma, but he did not open his lips to say anything overtly. In fact, his Mana (the combined instruments of the mind and the heart) trembled and shook with utmost distress and agony just like the leaf of the 'Pipal tree' (the Indian fig tree) that shakes with the least sign of wind passing over it¹. (3)

In the mean time, Lord Ram (the Lord of the Raghu-race; "raghupati") perceived the extremely sorrowful and dismal state of his father, and the mental turmoil he was going through. The Lord was also concerned that if any delay was made, there were chances that his mother (i.e. Kaikeyi) would say something more scorching and caustic that would pain his father and aggravate his sufferings further². (4)

Hence, in order to pre-empt any fresh nuisance being created by Kaikeyi, Lord Ram deliberated on the matter and then spoke most politely and courteously to suit the occasion, keeping in mind the gravity of the prevailing situation and the import of what was to come. (5)

[Note—¹The leaves of this tree have very thin and long stems, so even a soft and almost imperceptible wind would shake the leaf. Besides this, the Pipal tree is regarded as a sacred one in Hinduism. So this analogy means that at heart and in his mind king Dasrath was a pious soul devoted to the Lord God, but his resolve gave way when he faced a woman. He was in a dilemma and completely vexed; for he could not decide if he ought to speak openly to refuse to oblige Kaikeyi and tell Lord Ram not to obey his words, or should he leave it to Lord Shiva and Brahma to inspire Lord Ram to disobey his father's words. The poor king trembled and shivered at the agonizing prospect of his separation from his beloved Lord Ram.

²Lord Ram perceived from the corners of his eyes that Kaikeyi was itching for a new tirade of caustic remarks against king Dasrath. As we know, Lord Ram had a very compassionate and merciful heart, and by now the Lord could easily see how much Dasrath loved him. The Lord did not want that Dasrath should be subjected to any more sufferings on the account of him or Kaikeyi. It was quite possible that when the angry Kaikeyi saw that Dasrath was silent and quivering like the leaf of a fig tree, she might fear that Lord Ram himself would refuse to oblige her, which would, in turn, incite her wrath and provoke her to unleash a fresh tide of taunts and caustic remarks.

So therefore, Lord Ram decided that it was the ripe time for him to intervene, and stop the thing from going out of hand.]

तात कहउँ कछु करउँ ढिठाई । अनुचितु छमब जानि लरिकाई ॥ ६ ॥
अति लघु बात लागि दुखु पावा । काहुँ न मोहि कहि प्रथम जनावा ॥ ७ ॥

देखि गोसाइँहि पूँछिउँ माता । सुनि प्रसंगु भए सीतल गाता ॥ ८ ॥

tāta kaha'um' kachu kara'um' dhiṭhā'ī. anucitu chamaba jāni larikā'ī. 6.
ati laghu bāta lāgi dukhu pāvā. kāhum' na mōhi kahi prathama janāvā. 7.
dēkhi gōsā'im'hi pūm'chi'um' mātā. suni prasaṅgu bha'e sītala gātā. 8.

Lord Ram addressed king Dasrath and said very politely: 'My dear father (tāta)! Excuse me for being bold to submit something before thee, and please forgive me for speaking without being asked to say anything as I am but thy child. (6)

It is such a small and inconsequential matter for which thy havest wrought so much of unwanted sorrow and unnecessary grief upon thine self. Why I was not informed about it earlier by anyone¹? (7)

When I came here before thine august presence, it was only then that I got to learn about the cause of thy sorrows when mine mother (Kaikeyi) told me about it.² (8)

[Note—¹Lord Ram downplays the entire episode. He acts as if the news of his banishment to the forest was a very light matter that does not qualify for the seriousness with which his father has taken it. So therefore, why is Dasrath so upset that he has given Kaikeyi the word that would put Bharat on the throne and send Lord Ram to the forest? There is nothing to regret in this decision. The Lord has already said he was very happy at it, that he has nothing to regret, and that he is willing to cooperate in fulfilling both the words that his father has given to Kaikeyi—first to anoint Bharat on the throne, and then to send the Lord to the forest, for the Lord was cheerfully willing to go there.

To wit, Lord Ram has already told Kaikeyi about his willingness to accept both the conditions. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 41—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 42.}

Further, the Lord wanted his grieving father to feel assured that his son has not taken anything at all badly; that Lord Ram has not felt aggrieved or hurt when told that he has been ordered by his father to go to the forest, and that the crown has been snatched from him. He was rather happy that his beloved brother Bharat would get the right to rule the kingdom in his stead, and that he would get the privilege of meeting countless sages and holy men while in the forest. So therefore, Lord Ram urged Dasrath to give up lamenting and grieving on this issue, and cheer up.

²Sumantra was the first person who met Lord Ram after what transpired between Kaikeyi and Dasrath, but he had not told the Lord anything for the simple reason that he himself was unaware of anything. Sumantra had just told Lord Ram that he ought to come with him urgently to the king's place. {Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 38—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 39.}

When the Lord reached there, he found Dasrath lying on the ground in a very dismal and pitiful condition. Since the king said nothing as he was unconscious, the Lord enquired of his mother about what had happened. It was then that Kaikeyi informed him about the two words of honour that Dasrath has given her. So in this present verse, the Lord refers to him being first informed about the whole episode by

Kaikeyi. {Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 38—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no.}]

दो०. मंगल समय सनेह बस सोच परिहरिअ तात ।

आयसु देइअ हरषि हियँ कहि पुलके प्रभु गात ॥ ४५ ॥

dōhā.

maṅgala samaya sanēha basa sōca parihari'a tāta.

āyasu dē'i'a haraṣi hiyaṁ kahi pulakē prabhu gāta. 45.

Lord Ram said to Dasrath: 'Oh dear father (tāta)! It is an auspicious time, and not a time to feel sorry, to lament and regret due to thy affection for me.

So therefore, father, cheer up, and grant me thine permission with a happy and willing heart.'

Saying this, Lord Ram became thrilled in his body¹. (Doha no. 45)

[Note—¹Why is it an auspicious time that has thrilled Lord Ram? Well, the answer is obvious and not far to seek: it was the moment for which Lord Ram was waiting himself, for he had a great mission to eliminate the demons, for it was the primary reason why the Supreme Being had come down to earth in the form of Lord Ram; another objective was to grant beatitude and deliverance to numerous sages and pious souls living in the far-flung parts of the land, in dense forests as well as in villages and hamlets that were spread far and wide. This was possible only if Lord Ram proceeded on foot to the forest; it would not have been possible if he had ascended the throne to become a king of a mighty kingdom of Ayodhya. First it was important to fulfill the primary objective, and the crown could wait for some time more.

This was the reason why Lord Ram felt happy that he has finally got an opportunity for which he was waiting so long.

The other reason is that it would give him a chance to obey his father's words; it would make his mother Kaikeyi happy; it would give Bharat a chance to become a Prince-Regent.

Well, imagine a situation where Lord Ram would have ascended the throne to become a king of Ayodhya in a routine manner. Will this have given us the story of the 'Ramayana' as we know of it? No, definitely not. Lord Ram's glories and fame attained their shine and pinnacle after he had gone to the forest; his story was immortalized in the form of the epic Ramayana because of what the Lord did during his sojourn in the forest. Otherwise, he would have been one of the many kings of the Raghu-race who ruled over Ayodhya, and remained limited to the pages of royal histories.]

चौ०. धन्य जनमु जगतीतल तासू । पितहि प्रमोदु चरित सुनि जासू ॥ १ ॥

चारि पदारथ करतल ताकें । प्रिय पितु मातु प्रान सम जाकें ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

ghan'ya janamu jagatīṭala tāsū. pitahi pramōdu carita suni jāsū. 1.
cāri padāratha karatala tākēm. priya pitu mātu prāna sama jākēm. 2.

Lord Ram continued to speak to his father, king Dasrath, ‘A person is very praiseworthy and honourable whose good character and excellent virtues give immense joy to his father when the latter hears of them. [To wit, a son is truly worthy whose father feels proud of him when he learns about his son’s virtues and glories being praised by others.]¹ (1)

A son who loves his parents like a person would love his own life is indeed very fortunate, as all the four rewards of a meritorious life² that a person expects to get are easily available to him. (2)

[Note—¹This rule applies to Lord Ram to the dot, because everyone praised his noble character and excellent virtues, and the tidings of the Lord’s glories and good fame had gladdened his father’s heart exceedingly—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 1; (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 2; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 3; (iv) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 32.

²The four rewards of a meritorious life are the following: Artha—financial well-being; Dharma—good name and fame for being an auspicious person who upholds the principles of righteousness and good conduct; Kaam—fulfillment of desires; and Moksha—liberation and deliverance from this mortal world; to attain spiritual beatitude and felicity; the spiritual rewards of salvation and emancipation.

Lord Ram’s words hold great significance for all of us—for they teach us the importance of showing respect to our parents.]

आयसु पालि जनम फलु पाई । ऐहउँ बेगिहिं होउ रजाई ॥ ३ ॥
बिदा मातु सन आवउँ मागी । चलिहउँ बनहि बहुरि पग लागी ॥ ४ ॥

āyasu pāli janama phalu pā'ī. aiha'um' bēgihiṁ hō'u rajā'ī. 3.
bidā mātu sana āva'um' māgī. caliha'um' banahi bahuri paga lāgī. 4.

By obeying thine orders I shalt get immense good fame and merit, and I shalt be worthy of an honourable birth¹. Further, after having fulfilled thine words (given to my mother Kaikeyi), I shalt return forthwith, without delay².

Hence, please grant me thy permission so that I can fulfill my obligation as a son, and live to gain merit by doing so. (3)

I shalt go to my mother (Kaushalya) immediately to get her permission too³, and then I shalt return to thee to once again touch thy feet and seek thine blessings before proceeding to the forest directly thereafter.’ (4)

[Note—¹Lord Ram has said almost a similar thing to Bharat in order to persuade the latter that both the brothers ought to obey their father’s orders as it would bring great merit and good fortune to them, because it is an excellent thing to obey one’s parent,

while disobedience would be a sinful act. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-6 that precede Doha no. 315.}

²Lord Ram had kept his promise given to his father, for he did not waste a single day to come back to Ayodhya at the end of the fourteen years of his forest exile. The Lord shall make a similar promise to his brother Bharat when the latter had gone to the forest in an attempt to bring Lord Ram back home. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 and Chanda line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 151; (b) Lanka Kand, Doha no. 116-a, b and c.}

³Lord Ram went to seek Kaushalya's blessings, and though she was initially shocked at this sudden turn of events, yet she granted her permission to him because her son was doing the right thing by obeying his father. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 53; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 54—to Doha no. 56.}]

अस कहि राम गवनु तब कीन्हा । भूप सोक बस उतरु न दीन्हा ॥ ५ ॥
नगर ब्यापि गइ बात सुतीछी । छुअत चढ़ी जनु सब तन बीछी ॥ ६ ॥

asa kahi rāma gavanu taba kīnhā. bhūpa sōka basa utaru na dīnhā. 5.
nagara byāpi ga'i bāta sutīchī. chu'ata carhī janu saba tana bīchī. 6.

Saying as narrated aforesaid, Lord Ram departed from his father's presence immediately (to go and seek his mother Kaushalya's permission to head to the forest).

The king was so shocked and numbed by the immensity of the grief and sadness that had overwhelmed him that he could not reply to the Lord¹. (5)

This evil and shocking news spread instantly in the whole city of Ayodhya just like the shock of a scorpion's sting spreads quickly over the whole body of the victim, sending him into jitters instantaneously, and causing a wave of lightening pain to surge all over his nerves and paralyzing them. (6)

[Note—¹It is to be remarked here that Lord Ram has not waited for any answer from his father, whether he should or should not go to Kaushalya to seek her blessings before moving out to the forest. Why so? It is because the Lord knew that Dasrath would never give him an explicit order to proceed to the forest, but the king's persistent silence on the matter and his reluctance to clearly articulate that he takes his words back, that he does not approve of Lord Ram going to the forest, that he expressly denies the Lord any such permission, because this order for sending him to the forest was never given by him with a free will but it was extracted from him by Kaikeyi under duress, by blackmailing him—all these things hinted that the king has given his silent consent in this matter, that it has his tacit approval, albeit indirectly—for it is said that a conscious and persistent silence on any given matter is a subtle way of acceptance of the proposition.

Further, Lord Ram did not wish to put his loving father to more embarrassment and pain at the hands of Kaikeyi who was glowering fiercely at both of them and was ready with a new set of vitriolic comments should Dasrath give a slightest hint of rescinding on his words given to her.]

सुनि भए बिकल सकल नर नारी । बेलि बिटप जिमि देखि दवारी ॥ ७ ॥
जो जहँ सुनइ धुनइ सिरु सोई । बड़ बिषादु नहिं धीरजु होई ॥ ८ ॥

sunī bha'ē bikala sakala nara nārī. bēli biṭapa jimi dēkhi davārī. 7.
jō jaham'suna'i dhuna'i siru sō'ī. barā biṣādu nahin dhīraju hō'ī. 8.

No sooner the bad news spread in the city but the citizens, all the men and the women folk, were jolted and thrown into a huge turmoil, becoming terribly agitated and jittery in the same way as the sight of a rapidly approaching (or spreading) wildfire would make all the trees and creepers in a forest tremble out of fear of impending doom and certain annihilation¹. (7)

Whosoever heard this unprecedented sad news beat his head wherever he was, for none could bear with the grief and sorrows it brought in its wake for everyone in the city; no one could reconcile with the truth that this news unveiled before them². (8)

[Note—¹The citizens were awake the whole night even as grand preparations were underway in the city for the next day's coronation ceremony of their beloved princes, Lord Ram. Though there were some signs of something being wrong in the early morning hours when those assembled at the palace gates heard no news of the king and had sent Sumantra to find out the reason for the delay on part of the king to make his appearance, soon found that the chief minister emerged from the palace with a grave and solemn face, made some lame excuses to those who enquired of him about the matter even as he headed straight to Lord Ram's home, then both of them, Sumantra and Lord Ram, came and hurried inside the palace as if something serious was unfolding inside it—so though these were ominous signs, but no one was ready or emotionally prepared for the terrible shock that this absolutely stunning and unbelievable turn of events, that defied all their wildest of predictions for the worst, would give them, for not a single soul could imagine that Lord Ram, who was declared by the king as the next heir of the kingdom, would be so suddenly, unceremoniously and without consultation with the council of ministers banished to the forest. This caused a huge storm amongst the citizens, each one of them wondering if he or she has heard it right, or is the Devil playing some sport with them.

At the most, when the king failed to appear before them in the morning, the assembled people thought that he was sick, but that Lord Ram would be banished to the forest was such a rude shock to them as a sudden strike of lightening would have on the nerves, and like the great thunder of a lightening stroke that is heard far and wide, this devastating news spread quickly through the sprawling city, leaving the entire population bewildered, stunned, vexed and paralysed.

In this analogy of the wildfire in a dense wood, a parallel is drawn between the mental condition of the helpless people and the equally helpless trees and creepers in a thick forest because the latter find themselves in grave danger of annihilation and burning to death as the tongues of flame from the rapidly spreading and rapidly approaching fire makes the trees and creepers dry up even before being actually burnt to ashes.

To wit, the very news of Lord Ram going to the forest unnerved the people of Ayodhya extremely, and they were so perplexed and confounded that did not know

what to say or do. They looked at the bleak and gloomy future of a life without Lord Ram being with them, should they survive the shock of separation from their beloved Lord, for it would be a life so dull and sorrowful that it would resemble a graveyard.

In this context, see: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 46—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 51; (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 81; (iii) Doha no. 84 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede it; and (iv) Doha no. 86 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it.

²The dazed citizens first thought that they have misheard something, or that the Devil was playing some truant upon them to tease them, but upon enquiry they found out that it was the rude truth that Lord Ram has been ordered to go to the forest by the king. There was an outcry of dismay and shock and outrage that reverberated in the city much like the rumble of a thunderclap.]

दो०. मुख सुखाहिं लोचन स्रवहिं सोकु न हृदयँ समाइ ।
मनहुँ करुन रस कटकई उतरी अवध बजाइ ॥ ४६ ॥

dōhā.

mukha sukhāhiṁ lōcana sravahiṁ sōku na hṛdayam̐ samā'i.
manahum̐ karuna rasa kaṭaka'ī utarī avadha bajā'i. 46.

Every citizens' mouths became dry out of shock; tears rolled down their eyes; and the sorrow and distress were so huge that their hearts could not contain them (for everyone wept so bitterly and grieved so grievously that it looked their survival was at stake).

It appeared that an army of sorrow, dismay and grief has descended upon the city, announcing its proud arrival by beating of drums, even as it besieged the beleaguered city from the outside and pitched its camp within it¹. (Doha no. 46)

[Note—¹In this imagery, the sorrows, grief and lamentations that overwhelmed the city are likened to an invading army that runs amok within the city after overrunning its defense walls. The once happy and prosperous city is turned into a cauldron of misery and pain when it is seized by an enemy army, for the invading army enjoys tormenting the citizens and exacting its reward from them by plundering the city and laying it to a ruin—for as soon as the news of Lord Ram's forest exile went wild in the city, its condition was no different from that of a city invaded by an enemy's army.]

चौ०. मिलेहि माझ बिधि बात बेगारी । जहँ तहँ देहिं कैकइहि गारी ॥ १ ॥
एहि पापिनिहि बूझि का परेऊ । छाड़ भवन पर पावकु धरेऊ ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

milēhi mājha bidhi bāta bēgārī. jaham̐ taham̐ dēhiṁ kaika'ihī gārī. 1.
ēhi pāpinihi būjhi kā parē'ū. chā'i bhavana para pāvaku dharē'ū. 2.

Everywhere (i.e. in all the nooks and corners of the city) people gathered together (in groups) and cursed Kaikeyi that she had wickedly interfered and ruined everything (though the plan to anoint Lord Ram was in its final phase). (1)

They lambasted Kaikeyi: ‘What did this sinful woman think of as she set afire a home that was almost finished?

[To wit, what great benefit did Kaikeyi think wouldst come to her by sending Lord Ram to the forest when everything was ready for the Lord’s anointment on the throne? It is as wicked and morbid as first allowing one to complete one’s home, and just before its inauguration to set it on fire. Is it not a case of Devil possessing her; fie to her! It is truly ghoulish and most condemnable thing for a person of honour to even think of it, what to say of actually doing it.] (2)

निज कर नयन काढ़ि चह दीखा । डारि सुधा बिषु चाहत चीखा ॥ ३ ॥
कुटिल कठोर कुबुद्धि अभागी । भइ रघुबंस बेनु बन आगी ॥ ४ ॥

nija kara nayana kāḍhi caha dīkhā. ḍāri sudhā biṣu cāhata cīkhā. 3.
kuṭīla kaṭhōra kubud'dhi abhāgī. bha'i raghubansa bēnu bana āgī. 4.

It is as sheer a madness, a height of incredulity and utterly horrifying to think of someone pulling out his eyes to see how they look, or of throwing away ambrosia and wanting to taste poison instead¹. (3)

Alack-a-day! This vile woman is indeed wicked, evil, hard-hearted, and pervert in her mind. Truly and without gainsay, she is like a fire for a bamboo grove symbolized by the illustrious family of king Raghu². (4)

[Note—¹The citizens target Kaikeyi and lament that her action of sending Lord Ram to the forest is as stupid and horrifying as a mad man wanting to tear off his eyes to see their shape, or wanting to taste poison after throwing away nectar. Dost she wot naught what she is doing?

⁴A fire would quickly reduce the bamboo grove to ashes. So, the citizens lament that Kaikeyi is determined to ruin the whole family by giving it a bad name and infamy for all times to come.

King Dasrath too has lamented in the same way—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 29 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede it.]

पालव बैठि पेड़ु एहिं काटा । सुख महुँ सोक ठाटु धरि ठाटा ॥ ५ ॥
सदा रामु एहि प्रान समाना । कारन कवन कुटिलपनु ठाना ॥ ६ ॥

pālava baiṭhi pēṛu ēhiṁ kātā. sukha mahum̐ sōka ṭhāṭu dhari ṭhātā. 5.
sadā rāmu ēhi prāna samānā. kārana kavana kuṭīlapanu ṭhānā. 6.

[Citing another example of Kaikeyi's stupidity and lack of right thinking, the citizens criticize her—] Verily, her actions are like that of a mad person who has gone out of his wits for cutting the same tree on one of which branches he is sitting.

She has erected an eyesore of an edifice of sorrow, misery and grief amidst an environment of happiness and joy¹. (5)

Lord Ram had always been dear to her, and she had loved the Lord as she would love her own life². It is beyond our comprehension, it flummoxes us beyond measure, as to the cause why she would so suddenly turn so wicked and hostile (against the Lord)³.

[Note—¹We have already read that even king Dasrath has sternly rebuked and scolded her—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 36 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede it. In Doha no. 36 referred here, she has also been compared to a reprehensible necromancer practicing black magic to raise the ghost of the dead in a cemetery.

²Even Kaikeyi has herself acknowledged this fact—that Lord Ram was very dear to her. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 15.

The fact that there was a very cordial and affectionate relationship between Lord Ram and Kaikeyi was well known to everyone. So the citizens could not come to terms with the new fact that the same Kaikeyi would want Lord Ram condemned to be banished to the forest as if some great criminal is sent to exile in the wilderness as punishment for a serious crime he has committed.

³Even Dasrath was perplexed by Kaikeyi's sudden change of heart against Lord Ram, and the king just could not understand the reason behind it—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 32.]

सत्य कहहिं कबि नारि सुभाऊ । सब बिधि अगहु अगाध दुराऊ ॥ ७ ॥
निज प्रतिबिंबु बरुकु गहि जाई । जानि न जाइ नारि गति भाई ॥ ८ ॥

satya kahahim kabi nāri subhā'ū. saba bidhi agahu agādha durā'ū. 7.
nija pratibimbu baruku gahi jā'ī. jāni na jā'i nāri gati bhā'ī. 8.

Learned men and wise seers have truthfully asserted that it is difficult to comprehend the fickle mind of a woman, for it is shrouded in mystery and can change contours infinitely without warning (that one is left perplexed and confounded by her actions and thoughts). (7)

Oh brother (bhā'ī), it may be possible for one to catch hold of his own shadow, but to understand a woman (viz. the way she would act, think, talk, as well as her character) is something that is well nigh impossible to do. (8)

दो०. काह न पावकु जारि सक का न समुद्र समाइ ।
का न करै अबला प्रबल केहि जग कालु न खाइ ॥ ४७ ॥

dōhā.

kāha na pāvaku jāri saka kā na samudra samā'i.
kā na karai abalā prabala kēhi jaga kālu na khā'i. 47.

What is there in this world that the fire cannot burn, and what is there that cannot be drowned and sunk in an ocean?

Verily indeed, forsooth and without gainsay, what is there that a woman can't devise a device to do if she is determined at it? Say, who is there in this world whom death would not devour? (Doha no. 47)

[Note—¹In this Doha we read about certain things that are universal truths in this world. For instance, anything coming in touch with fire is burnt; there is nothing so large that it cannot sink in the depths of the ocean; and death spares no one.

In the same vein, the poet Tulsidas says that there is nothing beyond a woman's ability if she is determined to do it. This assertion has a positive aspect too, besides the negative connotation in which it is used in the context of Kaikeyi. It shows women in a good light, for it is affirmed that if she is determined to do anything, she will have her way. It is a significant observation, because in earlier days when the society was more of a patriarchal nature, a woman was assigned an inferior role as compared to her male counterpart. This Doha underscores her importance and abilities in an otherwise male dominated society; she ought to be given her due place and honour in the society, and her role should never be underplayed or undermined.]

चौ०. का सुनाइ बिधि काह सुनावा । का देखाइ चह काह देखावा ॥ १ ॥

एक कहहिं भल भूप न कीन्हा । बरु बिचारि नहिं कुमतिहि दीन्हा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kā sunā'i bidhi kāha sunāvā. kā dēkhā'i caha kāha dēkhāvā. 1.

ēka kahahim bhala bhūpa na kīnhā. baru bicāri nahim kumatihi dīnhā. 2.

The citizens lamented: 'Alas: What has the creator done by making us hear now something that is very opposite to what he had made us hear a little ago¹. Alack-a-day! What has he shown us now instead of what we had wished to see²?

[To wit, the ways of the Creator are whimsical and unpredictable indeed.]³ (1)

One of the citizens said that the king has not done the right thing by granting a word to Kaikeyi without giving a thought to what its consequences would be. (2)

[Note—¹The citizens are reflecting the thought of king Dasrath as narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 29 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede it.

Just a day earlier the citizens had heard that Lord Ram would be anointed on the throne by the king*, and within a day they hear that the Lord is banished to the forest by the same king. {*Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 7; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 11.}

²Further, everyone wanted to see Lord Ram on the throne of the kingdom#, and all of a sudden they have to see him proceeding to the forest. {#Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 1; (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 4; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 11.}

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 206.]

जो हठि भयउ सकल दुख भाजनु । अबला बिबस ग्यानु गुनु गा जनु ॥ ३ ॥
एक धरम परमिति पहिचाने । नृपहि दोसु नहिं देहिं सयाने ॥ ४ ॥

jō haṭhi bhaya'u sakala dukha bhājanu. abalā bibasa gyānu gunu gā janu. 3.
ēka dharama paramiti pahicānē. nṛpahi dōsu nahim dēhim sayānē. 4.

That promise which the king had given to Kaikeyi earlier has now become a thorn for him, for it has doomed him and subjected everyone to immense sorrows and grief.

Indeed, though the king is wise and conscientious otherwise, but it is so unfortunate that he has fallen victim to a woman and so easily subdued by her. (3)

Someone else who knew about the rules of good conduct and probity, however, did not squarely blame the king for the debacle, and he objected to the king being singled out for condemnation¹. {Why? This is answered in the next set of verses herein below.} (4)

[Note—¹As it always happens in such cases, the people had different and widely varying opinions concerning the developments. Some put the blame for the misfortunes squarely on king Dasrath; others took his side and said the king had no choice, for having once given his word, he was morally bound to honour it; some said the real culprit was Kaikeyi, while others blamed the creator and destiny for bringing ruin upon them; some suggested that Bharat had a hand in the conspiracy to oust Lord Ram, while others took his side and said that he certainly was innocent. But all were of one unanimous view—that Lord Ram was wrongly being punished, and that they don't see how they would live, how they would survive without the Lord being present amongst them.]

सिबि दधीचि हरिचंद कहानी । एक एक सन कहहिं बखानी ॥ ५ ॥
एक भरत कर संमत कहहीं । एक उदास भायँ सुनि रहहीं ॥ ६ ॥

sibi dadhīci haricanda kahānī. ēka ēka sana kahahim bakhānī. 5.
ēka bharata kara sammata kahahim. ēka udāsa bhāyam suni rahahim. 6.

Those citizens who sided with Dasrath and refused to blame him for the calamity (saying that he was morally obliged to keep his words of honour given to Kaikeyi), cited the instances of sage-kings Shibi, Dadhichi¹ and Harishchandra² to justify their contention, narrating their stories in detail to those who held the king squarely

responsible for all the developments. [It is because these three great persons cited here had sacrificed a lot just to be truthful to their words.] (5)

Someone blamed Bharat for the calamity, saying he has a secret hand in the conspiracy to oust Lord Ram (so that Bharat could grab the crown).

There were others who made no comments, but preferred to remain silent. [These people could not decide what to believe and what not to. Also, they did not want to divulge their thoughts for the fear of repercussions. They remained pensive and in a somber mood.] (6)

[Note—¹The story of sage Shibi and king Dadhichi has already been narrated as a note appended to Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 30 herein above. Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 95.

²The story of king Harishchandra: He was a great king of the Ikswaku dynasty in which Lord Ram, one of the major incarnations of Lord Vishnu, was born. Harishchandra was the son of king Trishanku. Once, his royal priest, sage Vashistha, had praised him in the heavenly court of Indra, the king of Gods, for his truthfulness and adherence to words of honour. Another great sage known by the name Vishwamitra wanted to test the veracity of Vashistha's statement and find flaws with it because he was a traditional rival of Vashistha.

So, Vishwamitra approached Harishchandra and asked for his entire kingdom as donation. Harishchandra gladly gave it, but Vishwamitra was not satisfied. He asked for 'Dakshina'—the traditional token money that is given to a visiting Brahmin after his demands are met. Having already given his entire kingdom to Vishwamitra, the poor Harishchandra had nothing left to give, so he went out of the kingdom to search for sufficient funds to pay Vishwamitra. He sold off his son and wife, and himself took up service with a Chandala, the low-caste men who perform last rites of dead on the banks of a river, at the pilgrim town of Varanasi.

To test his resolution, Vishwamitra assumed the form of a serpent and bit the infant child of Harishchandra, whereby he died. The mother brought the dead child for cremation at Varanasi, but Harishchandra demanded the traditional fees from her. When the poor lady could not pay it, and even disclosed her identity, Harishchandra explained to her that he needed the tax to accumulate sufficient money so that he can fulfill his promise to Vishwamitra before he dies, for otherwise he will die in ignominy and sin. As to how to pay the money, the king told her to tear the Sari (which is long piece of cloth that women wear in India to wrap and cover their bodies) in lieu of the tax.

It was enough. The Lord caught hold of his hands, and told Vishwamitra that he will be severely punished if he exceeded limits. Vishwamitra was himself pleased by the king's truthfulness and adherence to his words, so he blessed the couple and the son was revived back to life. The king was given his kingdom back with due honour.

This event is remembered in all the ancient texts and cited as examples of how one should suffer to uphold principles of Dharma (truthfulness, righteousness, honesty and propriety).

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 30, and (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 95, where it is stated that these great kings endured a lot of suffering for the cause of upholding the

principles of Dharma, of which being truthful to one's words-of-honour given to someone is one of the primary conditions.]

कान मूदि कर रद गहि जीहा । एक कहहिं यह बात अलीहा ॥ ७ ॥

सुकृत जाहिं अस कहत तुम्हारे । रामु भरत कहुं प्रानपिआरे ॥ ८ ॥

kāna mūdi kara rada gahi jīhā. ēka kahahim yaha bāta alihā. 7.

sukṛta jāhim asa kahata tumhārē. rāmu bharata kahum'prānapi'ārē. 8.

When accusations were made against Bharat, then some among the audience refused to believe this argument; they closed their ears with their hands and bit their tongues to vehemently oppose this conjecture. They said that it is absolutely false (that Bharat has given his tacit support for this evil design hatched by his mother, and that he is totally innocent of the matter). (7)

Exonerating Bharat from any foul play, they said: 'Listen, all your merits would be gone (and you will be guilty of speaking a falsehood) if you say such an evil thing for Bharat, for (is it not known to all that) Lord Ram is exceedingly dear to Bharat, that Bharat loves the Lord as much as he loves his own life¹?' (8)

[Note—¹It is to be remarked here that the affection that the brothers shared for each other was well known to everyone in the city, so no one was ready to subscribe to the view that Bharat had conspired against Lord Ram.]

दो०. चंदु चवै बरु अनल कन सुधा होइ बिषतूल ।

सपनेहुं कबहुं न करहिं किछु भरतु राम प्रतिकूल ॥ ४८ ॥

dōhā.

candu cavaī baru anala kana sudhā hō'i biṣatūla.

sapanēhum'kabahum'na karahim kichu bharatu rāma pratikūla. 48.

The people were so confident of Bharat's innocence that they said (unanimously): 'It may so happen that the moon (which is so cool and soothing) might shower burning particles of matter (instead of its cool moonlight), or ambrosia might turn into a horrible poison, but it is absolutely not possible for Bharat to do or think of anything that is against Lord Ram, even in his dreams.' (Doha no. 48)

चौ०. एक बिधातहि दूषनु देहीं । सुधा देखाइ दीन्ह बिषु जेहीं ॥ १ ॥

खरभरु नगर सोचु सब काहू । दुसह दाहु उर मिटा उछाहू ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

ēka bidhātahi dūṣanu dēhim. sudhā dēkhā'i dīnha biṣu jēhim. 1.

kharabharu nagara sōcu saba kāhū. dusaha dāhu ur miṭā uchāhū. 2.

Someone blamed the Creator for the misfortune that descended upon the people, lamenting that he was deceitful inasmuch as he first offered them nectar (to make the people exult in joy), then all of a sudden changed it to poison (so that they suffer)¹. (1)

Verily, there was a great tumult in the city; every person was terribly upset. There was a wave of grief that caused an intense heartburn in every citizen; the previous atmosphere of joy, celebrations and festivities vanished, and it was suddenly replaced by a thick pall of gloom and sadness that pervaded throughout the sprawling city of Ayodhya. (2)

[Note—¹Here, ‘nectar’ is symbolized by the welcome news of Lord Ram being anointed on the throne, a news that sent waves of joy throughout the city of Ayodhya, and the ‘poison’ is the bad news of the Lord being banished to the forest instead, a news that upturned every hope of happiness, and turned the city into a miserable condition, with everyone grieving in sorrow.

The whimsical and arbitrary nature of the Creator has been mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 206.]

बिप्रबधू कुलमान्य जठेरी । जे प्रिय परम कैकई केरी ॥ ३ ॥

लगीं देन सिख सीलु सराही । बचन बानसम लागहिं ताही ॥ ४ ॥

biprabadhū kulamān'ya jaṭhērī. jē priya parama kaika'ī kērī. 3.
lagīṁ dēna sikha sīlu sarāhī. bacana bānasama lāgahīṁ tāhī. 4.

The elderly and respected women of the city, such as Brahmin ladies and those who were shown favour by the royal family, as well as those whom Kaikeyi personally liked [3], approached her, and tried to make her see sense in a most polite way, by adopting a diplomatic tactic of praising her good character and wisdom¹. But instead of heeding their advice, Kaikeyi took their words as arrows and taunts being shot at her. [4] (3-4)

[Note—¹The elderly ladies tried to calm down Kaikeyi's wrath by praising her, for they thought that this polite approach would sooth her and help to soften her heart. They did their best in their attempt to dissuade her from taking things too far. But it had an opposite effect on her, for she took their advice as an affront and taunt. Their well-intentioned words pierced Kaikeyi's heart as if arrows were being shot at her, thereby infuriating her all the more. Kaikeyi turned a deaf ear to all pleadings. {Refer: Doha no. 50 herein below.}

In the verses that follow herein below, we shall read what the elderly women told Kaikeyi.]

भरतु न मोहि प्रिय राम समाना । सदा कहहु यहु सबु जगु जाना ॥ ५ ॥

करहु राम पर सहज सनेहू । केहिं अपराध आजु बनू देहू ॥ ६ ॥

bharatu na mōhi priya rāma samānā. sadā kahahu yahu sabu jagu jānā. 5.
karahu rāma para sahaja sanēhū. kēhim aparādha āju banu dēhū. 6.

As mentioned above, the elderly women said to Kaikeyi: ‘Thou havest always said, and the whole world is aware of what thou havest consistently asserted, that Bharat is not as dear to thee as is Lord Ram (i.e. the whole world knows that you have always asserted that you love Lord Ram more than you love your own son Bharat). (5)

Indeed it is true that thou havest always had a natural sense of love and affection for Lord Ram¹. Say then, what is his mistake that thou hast so suddenly decided to punish him by sending him to the forest?² (6)

[Note—¹Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 15 where we read that Kaikeyi has herself affirmed this fact.

²The elderly ladies and close friends of Kaikeyi exhorted her to disclose if Lord Ram had done anything wrong which has rattled her so much. Why otherwise is she so disgruntled that she is hell-bent on punishing the Lord if he is innocent of any wrongdoing?

Even Dasrath was confounded by this question; even he was astonished that Kaikeyi would so suddenly turn hostile to Lord Ram whom she loved more than Bharat. He just couldn’t square the things up and comprehend Kaikeyi’s actions, that she would be so angry at Lord Ram as to punish him so severely by wishing him to be sent to exile in the forest, a punishment usually meted out to convicted criminals who are held guilty of a heinous crimes. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 32.}]

कबहुँ न कियहु सवति आरेसू । प्रीति प्रतीति जान सबु देसू ॥ ७ ॥

कौसल्याँ अब काह बिगारा । तुम्ह जेहि लागि बज्र पुर पारा ॥ ८ ॥

kabahuṁ na kiyahu savati ārēsū. prīti pratīti jāna sabu dēsū. 7.
kausalyāṁ aba kāha bigārā. tumha jēhi lāgi bajra pura pārā. 8.

Thou havest never had any ill-will or jealousy for any of thy sister-queens. The matter of fact is that thou havest always had affection for all of them, and this is well-known to everyone in the world. (7)

Say then, what hast Kaushalya (the mother of Lord Ram and the senior-most queen) done to harm thee that thou hast decided to vent thine wrath upon her¹ by turning it to wreak vengeance upon the whole helpless city and its innocent citizens, shocking everyone and reducing the people to abject misery as if a severe bolt of lightening has struck the city²? (8)

[Note—¹Dasrath too has made a similar observation when he said that Kaikeyi was unnecessarily suspecting that it was Kaushalya who had wanted that her son Lord Ram should inherit the crown, which might have caused jealousy in Kaikeyi’s heart, for she was not at all a party to his decision to anoint Lord Ram to the throne, and it was his own decision based on the tradition in the family as well as on the advice of

his councilors and chief priest. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 31 along with Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it.}

²A similar comment was made by king Dasrath while he was lamenting at Kaikeyi's evil demand. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 29.}]

दो०. सीय कि पिय सँगु परिहरिहि लखनु कि रहिहहिं धाम ।
राजु कि भूँजब भरत पुर नृपु कि जिइहि बिनु राम ॥ ४९ ॥
dōhā.

sīya ki piya samṅgu pariharihi lakhanu ki rahihahim dhāma.
rāju ki bhūmṅaba bharata pura nrpu ki ji'ihī binu rāma. 49.

[These elderly women painted a very dismal and grim picture of what would happen if Kaikeyi persisted with her wickedness and stubborn attitude. They prophesized a dark future by asking Kaikeyi as set of questions as follows—]

‘Will Sita bear separation from her dear husband, Lord Ram; will Laxman (Lord Ram's younger brother) live at home when separated from the Lord; will Bharat rule the kingdom in the absence of Lord Ram (as Kaikeyi had wickedly planned); and will the king (Dasrath) live without Lord Ram (i.e. he is sure to die)?¹’ (Doha no. 49)

[Note—¹Indeed, all their predictions came true.

(a) Sita accompanied her husband to the forest—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 68.

(b) Laxman too refused to stay home and went to the forest with Lord Ram—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 70; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 76.

(c) Bharat refused to accept the crown—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 182—to Doha no. 184.

(d) When king Dasrath learnt that Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman have finally quit the boundaries of his kingdom and are headed to the forest, he died wailing for Lord Ram—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 155 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it.

The irony of the situation is that the warning of these horrible consequences could not move Kaikeyi a wee whit, nor could they persuade her to change her stubborn stance. It seemed that the Devil had possessed her, and she was ensnared in a net cast by evil destiny.]

चौ०. अस बिचारि उर छाड़हु कोहू । सोक कलंक कोठि जनि होहू ॥ १ ॥
भरतहि अवसि देहु जुबराजू । कानन काह राम कर काजू ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

asa bicāri ura chārahu kōhū. sōka kalaṅka kōṭhi jani hōhū. 1.
bharatahi avasi dēhu jubarājū. kānana kāha rāma kara kājū. 2.

The ladies concluded their arguments by saying: ‘Therefore, thy wouldst be well advised to take everything into consideration, weigh the pros and cons of what thy art doing, abandon thine stubbornness and discard unwarranted anger that wouldst benefit thee nothing, but instead wouldst make thy a storehouse of infamy and grief, and a target of scorn, contempt and condemnation.

Surely, thy canst cheerfully bestow the crown of the kingdom to Bharat as thy havest wished to do, but, prithee tell us, what hast Lord Ram got to do in the forest¹? [This latter demand of yours has completely baffled us; it is so bewildering and incredulous that none of us can fathom the logic behind this absurd wish that you have made.] (2)

[Note—¹We have read earlier that king Dasrath was also very polite with Kaikeyi and has expressed his readiness to anoint Bharat on the throne, but what had perplexed him was the same question—i.e. what has Lord Ram got to do in the forest, why was he being condemned to go to the wilderness? {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 31—to Doha no. 32.}

Kaikeyi had no answer; she was so certain that Manthara, her trusted maid, was speaking the truth, and the rest of the people were merely cheating her, that she would turn a deaf ear to anything contrary to what Manthara had advised her—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 50 along with Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it.]

नाहिन रामु राज के भूखे । धरम धुरीन बिषय रस रूखे ॥ ३ ॥

गुर गृह बसहुँ रामु तजि गेहू । नृप सन अस बरु दूसर लेहू ॥ ४ ॥

nāhina rāmu rāja kē bhūkhē. dharama dhurīna biṣaya rasa rūkhē. 3.
gura gr̥ha basahum̐ rāmu taji gēhū. nṛpa sana asa baru dūsara lēhū. 4.

Lord Ram is not greedy for any kingdom or yearns for any crown¹, for the Lord is a strict follower of the rules of Dharma (good conduct, righteousness, probity and propriety), and at the same time dispassionate enough to be attracted by worldly charms and desire for its material pleasures and comforts². (3)

So therefore, ask the king to replace thy second wish as thy wanted to change it, and tell him that thou wouldst have Lord Ram to abide at his guru’s place (i.e. where sage Vasistha lives) instead³. (4)

[Note—¹King Dasrath too has said the same thing—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 31.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 179 where an exactly the same thing has been said with respect to Lord Ram’s nature and character.

³When the elderly ladies observed that Kaikeyi was determined not to change her stance that she wanted to banish Lord Ram from her sight, and that it is impossible to persuade her to let Lord Ram live within the city or in the palace itself, they devised an alternative plan. It was that Kaikeyi could allow the Lord to live in sage Vasistha's hermitage, far away from active participation in the affairs of the kingdom, because once Lord Ram begins to live in the sage's hermitage he has to maintain rules of an austere life lived by an ascetic or a hermit. They thought that it was a viable and practical alternative that would serve Kaikeyi's purpose.]

जौं नहिं लगिहहु कहें हमारे । नहिं लागिहि कछु हाथ तुम्हारे ॥ ५ ॥
जौं परिहास कीन्हि कछु होई । तौ कहि प्रगट जनावहु सोई ॥ ६ ॥

jauṁ nahim lagihahu kahēm hamārē. nahim lāgihi kachu hātha tumhārē. 5.
jauṁ parihāsa kīnhi kachu hōī. tau kahi pragaṭa janāvahu sōī. 6.

[Berating Kaikeyi further, the elderly ladies warned her in stern a language—]

Verily indeed and in all sooth, if thou dost naught pay heed to what we havest advised thee, then be sure that thou wilt get aught naught from this senseless misadventure (of thine pervert mind and stubborn heart). (5)

If peradventure thou hast wished to engage thyself in some sort of entertainment by creating a scene that would scare everyone around out of their wits, then come clean and say so, declare that all that hast happened was just a jest that thou wanted to play as a sport, and therefore there is naught much to it in substance. [Remember: This is not the time to crack jokes and fool around. See for yourself, the king is in a horrible and pitiable condition, the whole city is plunged in gloom and despair, and if the situation is allowed to go on further at this rate then a mighty calamity would befall on everyone, and then you will not be able to remedy it because the thing would have slipped out of hand by then.]*

[*This verse can be interpreted in a different way also as follows: “If peradventure Lord Ram hast done aught wrong to thee, then why doth thou naught speak about it and declare what hadst happened, instead of beating around the bush and kicking up a mighty storm over the matter? In case the Lord is guilty of some error on his part, surely he ought to be reprimanded for it, but remember nevertheless that the punishment ought to be discreet and in proportion to the crime, and not out of any whimsical ideas.”] (6)

राम सरिस सुत कानन जोगू । काह कहिहि सुनि तुम्ह कहूँ लोगू ॥ ७ ॥
उठहु बेगि सोइ करहु उपाई । जेहि बिधि सोकु कलंकु नसाई ॥ ८ ॥

rāma sarisa suta kānana jōgū. kāha kahihi suni tumha kahum' lōgū. 7.
uṭhahu bēgi sō'i karahu upāī. jēhi bidhi sōku kalaṅku nasāī. 8.

Ponder over the gravity of the matter and apply thine mind to contemplate what wouldst happen when the world comes to learn that thou havest been responsible for (the absurdity of) sending a son like Lord Ram to the forest. [Wouldn't it stigmatise

thee for the rest of thy life; have thou considered the ominous fallout of thine whimsical decision?]¹. (7)

So therefore, please get up and do something that would end this unpleasant and horrifying situation that is the cause of all evil, immense infamy and unfathomable grief that it has brought in its wake (thereby casting a pall of gloom over the whole city).’ (8)

[Note—¹The ladies cajoled Kaikeyi to somehow manage to make her change her mind by warning her the great infamy and ridicule she would be subjected to if she persists in pursuing with her misadventure: “Come to think over it: would you not be ridiculed and scorned at worldwide; would the people not pour vitriol upon you and condemn you for life; would they not look at you with excess of contempt and call you a disgraceful woman; would you be able to show your face to the world? Say, what justification would you give for this madness of yours? Pause for a while and quietly ponder over this matter seriously. One must think before one leaps; don’t put yourself and the name of your illustrious family on the block, and be ridiculed and condemned publicly. Don’t allow yourself to be literally roasted alive in full public glare. Howbeit, if Lord Ram has really committed some mistake that has so much enraged you and aroused your passions, then it will indeed benefit you to declare the matter in your defense, because then the blame would be squarely on the shoulders of Lord Ram and you shall be absolved of all nuisance or malfeasance.”

Their prophesy turned true, because we shall read by-and-by that wherever the news reached, that Kaikeyi was responsible for Lord Ram being exiled to the forest, everyone who heard it condemned her in unequivocal terms. What’s more, the act of a single wicked woman would drag with it the name of king Dasrath too, for he was held equally guilty for this unjustified punishment meted out to Lord Ram for the latter was condemned to suffer in the wilderness along with his wife Sita and brother Laxman, for no fault of theirs.

In this context, we can refer to how the people of Ayodhya, as well as those living in the far-flung villages and hamlets, and the travellers whom Lord Ram met on the road to the forest, reacted, as narrated at different places in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand—viz.: (i) Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 51; (ii) Doha no. 91 along with Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it; (iii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 110; (iv) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 111; (v) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 122.]

छं०. जेहि भाँति सोकु कलंकु जाइ उपाय करि कुल पालही । १ ।
हठि फेरु रामहि जात बन जनि बात दूसरि चालही ॥ २ ॥
जिमि भानु बिनु दिनु प्रान बिनु तनु चंद बिनु जिमि जामिनी । ३ ।
तिमि अवध तुलसीदास प्रभु बिनु समुझि धौं जियँ भामिनी ॥ ४ ॥
chanda.

jēhi bhāmṭi sōku kalaṅku jā'i upāya kari kula pālahī. 1.
haṭhi phēru rāmahi jāta bana jani bāta dūsari cālahī. 2.
jimi bhānu binu dinu prāna binu tanu canda binu jimi jāminī. 3.

timi avadha tulasīdāsa prabhu binu samujhi dhaurṁ jiyam̐ bhāminī. 4.

Repeating their plea to Kaikeyi, the elderly ladies earnestly requested her: ‘Please devise a device that would avert the immense grief and infamy that is about to descend upon thine illustrious family, and show wisdom that wouldst sustain the glory and fame of the glorious race. (Chanda line no. 1)

Since it is thine stubbornness which wouldst ultimately send Lord Ram to the forest, so the remedy for this calamity is also in thy hands—for it now only thou who couldst insist that the Lord ought to remain at home in the same way as thou hadst insisted that he must proceed to the forest. (Chanda line no. 2)

Just like the case of a day without a sun, a body without its life, and the night without moonlight ---, (Chanda line no. 3)

---So would be the case of Ayodhya in the absence of Lord Ram¹. (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹How correct was their prediction indeed, for the city was transformed in a ghost town where the people lamented, wept and grieved inconsolably once the news of Lord Ram going to the forest spread. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 29; (ii) Doha no. 46 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it; (iii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 83—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 84;.]

सो०. सखिन्ह सिखावनु दीन्ह सुनत मधुर परिनाम हित ।
तेइँ कछु कान न कीन्ह कुटिल प्रबोधी कूबरी ॥ ५० ॥
sōraṭhā.

sakhinha sikhāvanu dīnha sunata madhura parināma hita.
tē'im̐ kachu kāna na kīnha kuṭila prabōdhī kūbarī. 50.

The lady friends of Kaikeyi gave her sane advice that would yield pleasant results for her and would be in the interest of one and all, but the queen was so adamant because of the wickedness and the influence of delusions which the evil council of her maid Manthara has cast upon her that she would lend no ears and pay no heed to any good advice by anyone. (Doha no. 50)

चौ०. उतरु न देइ दुसह रिस रूखी । मृगिन्ह चितव जनु बाघिनि भूखी ॥ १ ॥
ब्याधि असाधि जानि तिन्ह त्यागी । चलीं कहत मतिमंद अभागी ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

utaru na dē'i dusaha risa rūkhī. mṛginha citava janu bāghini bhūkhī. 1.
byādhi asādhi jāni tinha tyāgī. calīm kahata matimanda abhāgī. 2.

Kaikeyi gave no answer to the ladies (who were trying to dissuade her from being reckless and committing an unprecedented mistake that would do her no good but

heap immeasurable misery upon the whole city, its helpless citizens, as well as the royal family itself)—because anger had made her become wroth with exceeding wrath and so stubborn that it drained her heart of all emotions so much that it had become stiffened and dry as baked earth.

She angrily glowered and frowned at her advisors as if a hungry lioness was eyeing at a group of deer, ready to pounce upon one of the poor creatures at the least provocation¹. (1)

The ladies finally concluded that it was an incurable disease, so decided to leave Kaikeyi and go away, all the while cursing her and saying that she is very pervert and her mind is wicked². (2)

[Note—¹We have noted herein above that whilst the elderly ladies were trying to reason with Kaikeyi in their effort to bring about a change in her heart, the latter remained stubbornly unresponsive and silent. Each statement of her advisors had added more fuel to Kaikeyi's ire, and she was on the verge of bursting forth with her wrath like a pent up volcano about to erupt and spew hot lava that would scorch everything around, when these ladies felt that it was a futile exercise to try to change her attitude, so they finally quit in exasperation. It was good that they did so whilst it was not late for them, for if they had spoken any more and waited another moment then it would have blown the lid off Kaikeyi's patience, and she would have yelled at them and insulted them, ordering them to either shut up and scoot from her presence, or face dire consequences.

Kaikeyi's attitude at this juncture is likened to a hungry lioness who is greedily eyeing her prey, a herd of innocent deer, and waiting for the slightest hint of provocation by the poor creatures to find an excuse to pounce upon them, devouring some of them and maiming others to avenge the imaginary insult that they deem to have cast upon the queen of the jungle by being arrogant and not submitting voluntarily to her.

²The lady friends of Kaikeyi concluded that she was not amenable and would not listen to any positive advice just like a patient who is in the throes of death, for he would not listen to what the doctor advises and do just the opposite. So it is better to leave her just like a doctor leaves an incurable patient because the latter determines that the patient's disease is incurable, and any more attempt at trying to cure him with medicines would not only aggravate the symptoms but make the patient more volatile. The doctor fears that when the patient dies the entire blame would fall upon the shoulders of the physician; so the wise doctor makes haste to quit before the worse happens.]

राजु करत यह दैअँ बिगोई । कीन्हेसि अस जस करइ न कोई ॥ ३ ॥

एहि बिधि बिलपहिं पुर नर नारीं । देहिं कुचालिहि कोटिक गारीं ॥ ४ ॥

rāju karata yaha dai'am̐ bigō'ī. kīnhēsi asa jasa kara'i na kō'ī. 3.

ēhi bidhi bilapahim̐ pura nara nārīm̐. dēhim̐ kucālihi kōṭika gārīm̐. 4.

While going away from Kaikeyi, the ladies scoffed at her and gloomily talked amongst themselves: 'Alack-a-day! She appears to have become very arrogant and

haughty because the Devil, represented by the evil aspects of having unbridled authority and power, seems to have possessed her. Verily, she is determined to do a thing that no one would dare to do or even think of doing. [But, alas, what can we do about it?]' (3)

In the aforesaid manner, the citizens grieved and lamented sorely, cursing Kaikeyi and heaping countless abuses on her. (4)

जरहिं बिषम जर लेहिं उसासा । कवनि राम बिनु जीवन आसा ॥ ५ ॥
बिपुल बियोग प्रजा अकुलानी । जनु जलचर गन सूखत पानी ॥ ६ ॥

jarahim biṣama jara lēhim usāsā. kavani rāma binu jīvana āsā. 5.
bipula biyōga prajā akulānī. janu jalacara gana sūkhata pānī. 6.

The helpless and distraught citizens were agitated and restless because they were virtually burning with the heat of intense agony (at the prospect of an impending separation from Lord Ram), just like a person suffering from high fever is restless and feels that his body is afire. They wondered what prospects they had of surviving and living peacefully in the absence of Lord Ram¹. (5)

There was a huge turmoil amongst the subjects of the kingdom; everyone was distraught and overwhelmed with grief and dismay even as creatures who live in water feel extremely distressed when they face the grim future of a severe drought drying up all sources of water, which is not only their lifeline but their habitat too². (6)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precede Doha no. 84; (ii) Doha no. 86 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it.

²Just as an impending drought terrifies creatures living in water and surviving on it, for they face imminent death, so the ominous prospect of Lord Ram going to the forest and abandoning them put the citizens of Ayodhya on edge, for it was unimaginable for them to live without their beloved Lord being present in their midst.]

अति बिषाद बस लोग लोगार्इ । गए मातु पहिं रामु गोसाईं ॥ ७ ॥
मुख प्रसन्न चित चौगुन चाऊ । मिटा सोचु जनि राखै राऊ ॥ ८ ॥

ati biṣāda basa lōga lōgā'īm. ga'e mātu pahim rāmu gōsā'īm. 7.
mukha prasanna cita cauguna cā'ū. miṭā sōcu jani rākhai rā'ū. 8.

All the men and women folk of the city were in the grip of excess of grief and dismay. Meanwhile, Lord Ram (rāmu gōsā'īm) went to meet his mother (Kaushalya)¹. (7)

The Lord's face showed that he was very cheerful and pleased, and he was greatly enthused at the prospect of going to the forest².

There was no more worry in the Lord's mind that the king might go back on his words and tell him to stay back³. (8)

[Note—¹We have read a little while earlier that Lord Ram had told his father, king Dasrath, that he would go to his mother (Kaushalya) immediately to seek her permission and blessings, and then come back to him (Dasrath) to seek his final approval and blessings before moving out of the city to go to the forest—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 46.

²Why was the Lord so happy at the prospect of going to the forest? Well, Lord Ram has given two reasons himself: viz. (i) that it would give him the chance to meet and seek blessings of great sages, seers, hermits and ascetics who live in the forest, and (ii) that it would give him the rare opportunity to fulfill his parents' wishes. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 41—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 42.}

But that was not all. Lord Ram was glad that now he would be able to fulfill the promise he had made to mother earth and the gods that he would personally come down to earth to eliminate the terror of demons. It would not have been possible to do it if the Lord remained in Ayodhya; to fulfill this mandate he had to travel to the very habitat where these demons lived in order to find them and eliminate them one by one. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 186—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 187; and (b) Aranya Kand, (ii) Doha no. 9 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede it.}

³Why was the Lord so sure that king Dasrath was not going to go back on his words? Well, when he had met his father, he had closely observed the general surroundings and analysed the prevailing mood. It was clear to him that Kaikeyi was in no mood to give up, that Dasrath had lost the will to resist and stand up against her, and even Sumantra—who could have intervened and changed the course of the developments as he was the chief minister of the kingdom, wielded immense power and authority, and it was within his powers to veto any decision of the king that undermined stability and the rule of law in the kingdom—remained silent and had yielded.

To wit, Dasrath did not utter a word and hadn't told Lord Ram that he need not go to the forest, Sumantra too remained mute, and as for Kaikeyi, she was beyond mending.

He knew his own mother Kaushalya's nature, that she would never advice her son to break his father's words, more so when his other mother, i.e. Kaikeyi, too has given her consent to his going to the forest. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 55—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 56.}

So therefore, all hurdles were removed, and now the Lord was sure that he could proceed to the forest without much trouble.]

दो०. नव गयंदु रघुबीर मनु राजु अलान समान ।

छूट जानि बन गवनु सुनि उर अनंदु अधिकान ॥ ५१ ॥

dōhā.

nava gayandu raghubīra manu rāju alāna samāna.
chūṭa jāni bana gavanu suni ura anandu adhikāna. 51.

Verily indeed, in all sooth and without gainsay, Lord Ram's 'Mana' (heart and mind; his thoughts and feelings) was like that of a young elephant, and the prospect of anointment on the throne of the kingdom was like the shackle that is used to catch and tie an elephant down.

So, the prospect of going to the forest made the Lord as elated and jubilant as a wild elephant whose shackles have been removed, leaving him free to move to its natural habitat in the wilds. (Doha no. 51)

[Note—Lord Ram's independence to go after the demons and search them out in their own habitat in the forest in order to eliminate them one by one would have suffered had he ascended the throne of Ayodhya to become its king. This is because, for one, no demon would ever dare to confront the Lord as a king of Ayodhya, as all of them knew that the kingdom had a powerful army against which they stood no chance in an open war.

Secondly, no glory would have come to the Lord even if he did fight and eliminate the demons, for he would have been obliged to employ the mighty army of Ayodhya for this purpose as he was its king.

Thirdly, the Lord would not have had the opportunity to meet even humble sages and hermits in far-flung areas of the forest to bless them by his presence and get their blessings himself by visiting their hermitages privately as an individual, for it would give a lot of freedom to the Lord as well as the host sage to interact with each other at a personal level, which would not have been possible in the glare of publicity and the pomp and ceremony that would naturally accompany a king if he went to visit someone.

Fourthly, the Lord wanted to see the beauty of Nature and experience its smells and sounds from close quarters, he wanted to walk barefoot to feel the earth and its warmth at a very personal level. This would not have been possible if he had not wandered in the forest and feel free to go anywhere he wished, because as a king his freedom would be limited and he would be tied down by royal protocol.

That is why his happiness is likened to that of a young elephant who is set free from its shackles and allowed to go wherever he wanted.]

चौ०. रघुकुलतिलक जोरि दोउ हाथा । मुदित मातु पद नायउ माथा ॥ १ ॥
दीन्हि असीस लाइ उर लीन्हे । भूषन बसन निछावरि कीन्हे ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

raghukulatilaka jōri dō'u hāthā. mudita mātu pada nāya'u māthā. 1.
dīnhi asīsa lā'i ura līnhē. bhūṣana basana nichāvari kīnhē. 2.

Lord Ram, who was like a gem in the illustrious royal family descending from the ancient king Raghu of Ayodhya (raghukulatilaka), reached his mother's place and stood before her, joining the palms of his hands as a gesture of respect for her, and cheerfully bowing his head at her feet. (1)

The mother (Kaushalya) blessed him heartily and clasped the Lord affectionately to her bosom. Then she scattered jewels and raiment around him to express her joy¹. (2)

[Note—¹Kaushalya was as yet not aware of what had happened behind her back. For her, Lord Ram was to be anointed as the Prince-Regent of the kingdom that day. She thought that he has come to her to seek her blessings in this regard. So therefore, she was exceedingly glad.]

बार बार मुख चुंबति माता । नयन नेह जलु पुलकित गाता ॥ ३ ॥
 गोद राखि पुनि हृदयँ लगाए । स्रवत प्रेमरस पयद सुहाए ॥ ४ ॥
 प्रेमु प्रमोदु न कछु कहि जाई । रंक धनद पदबी जनु पाई ॥ ५ ॥

bāra bāra mukha cumbati mātā. nayana nēha jalu pulakita gātā. 3.
 gōda rākhi puni hṛdayam lagā'ē. sravata prēmarasa payada suhā'ē. 4.
 prēmu pramōdu na kachu kahi jā'ī. rañka dhanada padabī janu pā'ī. 5.

The mother kissed Lord Ram's face repeatedly even as tears of affection filled her eyes and her body thrilled with joy. (3)

She made the Lord sit on her lap as she once again clasped him to her bosom¹ even as milk started flowing from her breasts due to excess of motherly love that overwhelmed her. (4)

She was so overcome with a surging wave of affection and love for her son, as well as a sense of exhilaration that she could not speak a word, just like the case of a pauper who suddenly and unexpectedly finds himself elevated to the stature of a rich man (for then he is so dumbstruck with astonishment as well as joy that he becomes speechless). (5)

[Note—¹We have read in verse no. 2 herein above that Kaushalya clasped Lord Ram to her bosom; at that moment the Lord was standing before his mother with a bowed head. Then Kaushalya sat down and made her beloved son sit so close to her it gave the impression that he was sitting on her lap. She then lovingly embraced her son the second time as narrated in this verse.]

सादर सुंदर बदन निहारी । बोली मधुर बचन महतारी ॥ ६ ॥
 कहहु तात जननी बलिहारी । कबहिं लगन मुद मंगलकारी ॥ ७ ॥
 सुकृत सील सुख सीवँ सुहाई । जनम लाभ कइ अवधि अघाई ॥ ८ ॥

sādara sundara badanu nihārī. bōlī madhura bacana mahatārī. 6.
 kahahu tāta janani balihārī. kabahim lagana muda maṅgalakārī. 7.
 sukṛta sīla sukha sīvam suhā'ī. janama lābha ka'i avadhi aghā'ī. 8.

The mother cheerfully looked at the Lord from head to foot (as if she was virtually blessing and caressing him affectionately with her view like a mother would to her

beloved son when she is exceptionally happy at some good tidings brought to her concerning him, something that would make her very proud of her son).

Then she spoke to him with a sweet (pleasant) voice. (6)

‘My dear son (tāta), your mother does not know how to contain her joy and sufficiently bless you (for I am so excited that I do not know how to bless thee and express mine happiness at this exceptional moment of joy)!

Pray, please tell me what that auspicious time is that has been fixed for your anointment ceremony¹? (7)

That auspicious hour (when you would be anointed on the throne) would represent the fruits of a meritorious life, excellent characters and immaculate virtues that ripen and reward all those who qualify for it, for indeed it will be the good fortune of Ayodhya and its fortunate citizens to be honoured in this way.’ (8)

[Note—¹Earlier, the same query was raised by the citizens, because though the declaration had been made by king Dasrath that Lord Ram would be anointed on the throne, but the exact time was not disclosed. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 11.}]

दो०. जेहि चाहत नर नारि सब अति आरत एहि भाँति ।

जिमि चातक चातकि तृषित बृष्टि सरद रितु स्वाति ॥ ५२ ॥

dōhā.

jēhi cāhata nara nāri saba ati ārata ēhi bhām̐ti.

jimi cātaka cātaki tr̥ṣita br̥ṣṭi sarada ritu svāti. 52.

Kaushalya continued: ‘It is that moment (i.e. the time of Lord Ram’s anointment) for which every person in the city, whether a man or a woman, is eagerly waiting with the same eagerness and enthusiasm with which the bird known as Chatak waits for the first drop of rain that falls during the winter season on the occasion of the appearance of the constellation known as Swati Nakhshatra.’¹ (Doha no. 52)

[Note—¹The Chatak (the sparrow hawk) is a special species of bird that would drink only drops of rain water, especially that which falls during the constellation called Swati Nakhshatra, which is the fifteenth asterism known as Arcturus, that occurs only during the winter season. This bird would prefer to die of thirst than to drink any other type of water. This metaphor is used by poets to imply an eagerness shown by a person who waits for something that he likes very much, for he thinks of nothing else but that which he loves.

Here it means that the citizens of Ayodhya were eagerly waiting for that auspicious hour when Lord Ram would be anointed on the throne of the kingdom as a Prince-Regent.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 1; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 128.]

चौ०. तात जाउँ बलि बेगि नहाहू । जो मन भाव मधुर कछु खाहू ॥ १ ॥

पितु समीप तब जाएहु भैआ । भइ बड़ि बार जाइ बलि मैआ ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

tāta jā'um^ṁ bali bēgi nahāhū. jō mana bhāva madhura kachu khāhū. 1.
pitu samīpa taba jā'ēhu bhai'ā. bha'i baḍi bāra jā'i bali mai'ā. 2.

Kaushalya told Lord Ram: 'My dear son (tāta), go and quickly have your bath; then come back to eat something sweet as refreshment. (1)

After that, my boy (bhai'ā), go to your father. It is getting late, so I beseech you to hurry up.¹ (2)

[Note—¹Kaushalya was oblivious that Lord Ram had already been to meet his father, and is directly coming to her from there. So she reacts in a natural way, asking her son to quickly have a bath, eat something, and then go to his father to get ready for the grand anointment ceremony.]

मातु बचन सुनि अति अनुकूला । जनु सनेह सुरतरु के फूला ॥ ३ ॥

सुख मकरंद भरे श्रियमूला । निरखि राम मनु भवँरु न भूला ॥ ४ ॥

mātu bacana suni ati anukūlā. janu sanēha surataru kē phūlā. 3.
sukha makaranda bharē śriyamūlā. nirakhi rāma manu bhavam^ṁru na bhūlā. 4.

Though the mother's words were pleasant to hear and so sweet that they were like the flowers of the heavenly tree of gods --- (3),

--- Nay, they were even like a ripe and sweet fruit of the same tree, yet the enticing sight of this beautiful flower or the sweet fruit (i.e. the reminder of the prospect of his ascending the throne of the kingdom) were not able to distract the bee symbolized by the mind of Lord Ram (because the Lord was firm in his resolve to proceed to the forest by forgoing his right to the throne)¹. (4)

[Note—¹Lord Ram showed no sign of sadness or remorse, nor any kind of displeasure, rancour and agitation, when his mother reminded him that he was to ascend the throne that day. The Lord did not lose his cool and burst out weeping and lamenting that he has been exiled to the forest instead. He maintained his cool and would politely tell his mother, as we shall read in the verses that follow herein below, that he won't be able to do as she advises him because contrary to what she expects, he has been told by his father to proceed to the forest.

In these verses, Lord Ram's mind has been compared to a bee, but unlike the that would normally hover over mature flowers and ripe fruits in the hope of drinking sweet nectar or juice respectively from them, Lord Ram's mind was not at all attracted by the charm of kingship that would make him get distracted from his chief mission on earth, which was to go to the forest in order to eliminate the terror of the demons which he, in his primary form as the Supreme Being, had promised the gods and mother earth.

Remember: This noble character of the Lord was well-known to everyone. Even Dasrath has cited it while assuring Kaikeyi that she need not have any fear that Lord Ram would stand in the way of her son Bharat's anointment to the throne as the Lord has no greed for the kingdom—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 31.

A similar assertion has been made by those who tried to advise Kaikeyi to abandon her stubbornness—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 50.

In this context, refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 179.]

धरम धुरीन धरम गति जानी । कहेउ मातु सन अति मृदु बानी ॥ ५ ॥
पिताँ दीन्ह मोहि कानन राजू । जहँ सब भाँति मोर बड़ काजू ॥ ६ ॥

dharama dhurīna dharama gati jānī. kahē'u mātu sana ati mṛdu bānī. 5.
pitāṁ dīnha mōhi kānana rājū. jaham̐ saba bhām̐ti mōra baṛa kājū. 6.

Lord Ram was well-versed in the Laws of Dharma and he was well acquainted with the call of his duty towards upholding the principles that govern highest standards of morality, righteousness, probity, propriety, good conduct and good character (dharama dhurīna dharama gati jānī)¹.

Keeping all this in mind, the Lord spoke most politely and sweetly to his mother. (5)

'My father has given me the kingdom of the forest (kānana rājū)*, which would be in my interest in all possible ways, and would help me to fulfill all my duties². (6)

[Note—¹To be a honest follower of the Laws of Dharma it oftentimes requires great sacrifices to be made, and a person is expected to see the larger picture and weigh all the pros and the cons of a given situation, and then act more in accordance with his conscience and judicious analysis of the whole state of affairs and circumstances rather being driven by a myopic vision of self-interest.

It was incumbent upon Lord Ram to take into consideration a lot many things, and not to be driven by emotions and sentiments. If he had wanted, the Lord could well have revolted and sought a justified reason for him being sent to the forest, and if he chose this option it was sure that he would have got full support from every quarter; even Bharat would have unreservedly taken his side against his own mother Kaikeyi.

But Lord Ram knew that was not the right thing to do for a variety of reasons: viz., it would mean that he has gone against the wishes of his father; that he was so good and civil and nice only till the time things were in his favour, but as soon as the things did not go the way he had wanted, and his personal interest was hit, he took up arms in revolt and showed his true colour; that his professed view that he loved all his brothers equally held good only till the time he was in line to the throne after his father, but as soon as one of his brothers, i.e. Bharat, got this opportunity, the Lord turned hostile, proving that his advocated love for his brothers was a sham just to keep them in good humour so they don't come in the way of his grabbing the throne; and so on and so forth the list could continue a long way.

²The ‘kingdom of the forest’ is as good as the ‘kingdom of Ayodhya’ for Lord Ram. He was happy to go to his new assignment. After all, it was the prerogative of the king (Dasrath) to decide whom to assign which task.

Besides this view, the Lord had other greater things in mind. He had to set an example of obedience to one’s parents. He had to show the world that to maintain cordial brotherly relationships it is necessary that each brother should be entitled to have an equal inheritance right over the father’s property under normal circumstance*, but it is subject to the condition that the father agrees to it, for otherwise it is the father whose will should prevail. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 10.}

Further, he had to keep the divine mandate to eliminate the scourge of the demons; he had to fulfill the dreams of so many countless pious souls who were living in the forest and undergoing so much hardship doing Tapa (penances) just for the chance of having the good fortune of seeing the Lord at least once in their lives at a personal level and being blessed by his divine vision, so that their souls could be granted eternal bliss and beatitude. After the sordid drama enacted by Kaikeyi, which put the otherwise innocent Bharat in a spotlight for being devilish, cunning, selfish and evil, Lord Ram had to maneuver things in such a way that in the long run Bharat would be proved innocent, honest, truthful and pious, as well as for being loyal and devoted to Lord Ram on equal terms as the rest of the people, and to absolve him of all false accusations.

Lord Ram going to the forest, in fact, gave us the legendary and timeless “Story of the Ramayana”, which has had, and which would have, a profound inspirational impact on generations and countless generations of the human race for all times to come. It would inspire devotion and love for the Supreme Being; it would give a simple tool in the hands of even an illiterate devotee who would find in it an easy way to remember his beloved Lord, and thereby qualify his soul for emancipation and deliverance, by the straightforward method of singing, hearing and retelling the Lord’s divine Story known as the Ramayana, without the complications and the intricacies of getting involved in complex metaphysical discourses and the study of the scriptures.

The conduct of everyone concerned, especially of all the four brothers during the entire episode of Lord Ram being exiled to the forest, his living in the forest, and his coming back after the term ended, laid down a practical guide of good conduct and noble behaviour to serve all the future generations that were to come; it would lay a solid foundation for what constitutes good conduct, good character, good thought, good governance, good relations, and the good-old virtue of ‘goodness’ in its entirety.

Verily indeed, all these things come under the jurisdiction of Dharma.

*It is worth noting that Lord Ram has used a warm and welcoming phrase of being granted the “kingdom of the forest”, instead of showing his anger and disgust by saying that he is being “exiled or banished to the forest”!

The Lord shows that he has nothing against his father, but is rather glad for his decision, for he believes that his father is perhaps sending him to the forest for a brief period of fourteen years to give him an opportunity to have a first-hand experience of a life, with its difficulties and problems, in the far-flung areas of the vast kingdom of Ayodhya, both the populated rural areas as well as the sparsely inhabited wooded parts of the realm, to personally see the extensive realm and understand its geography and topography, as well as to get an opportunity to interact with his subjects

personally, to feel their pulse and see their problems from up close, to see what changes needed to be done and which areas needed special attention, i.e. to get a comprehensive first-hand knowledge of the land that he would have to rule one day as its sovereign. This knowledge would obviously stand him in good stead when he actually ascends the throne of Ayodhya to become a King-Emperor at the end of the fourteen years of ‘internship’, so to say.

This brief sojourn in the forests would help Lord Ram understand the hardships and difficulties that are faced by people living in distant villages and hamlets of the kingdom, as well as to decide what he could do to alleviate their sufferings. This experience would prepare Lord Ram to rule his kingdom more wisely, judiciously, and in a compassionate manner; it would help him to find shortcomings in the administrative structure prevalent at the time and devise methods to improve it and make it more subject-friendly for the general betterment of his subjects; it would bring him closer to his people, and endear himself to them by his welfare measures. In the long run, Lord Ram would be able to establish an exemplary rule of law marked by good governance and delivery of services for the welfare of all his subjects without any bias, a kingdom which would be the envy of all others, a place where everyone would be happy and prosperous, and where amity, brotherhood and goodwill would prevail. Nothing of it would be possible if he does not go to visit his extended realm and experience life like a common man, walking on foot and living an ordinary life, but directly ascend the throne from a privileged position of a life of comfort and pleasures that a prince is usually accustomed to.

To wit, Lord Ram’s symbolic ‘anointment to the kingdom of the forest’ for fourteen years by king Dasrath was actually a ‘governorship’ that was assigned to him by his father over the vast realm of the mighty kingdom of Ayodhya that extended far beyond the boundaries of its capital city that bore the same name. It was a sort of a training period of internship for the Lord, to prepare him for bigger role at the end of this assignment.

Later on, when Lord Ram actually ascended the throne of Ayodhya at the end of these fourteen years, he did establish a rule that became exemplary and famous as ‘Ram Rajya’, which refers to ‘the excellent system of administration of the kingdom of Ayodhya under the sovereignty of Lord Ram that was marked by judicious application of the rule of law, where righteousness, auspiciousness, compassion, justice, probity and propriety were the dominant features in all spheres of life, a perfect state of affairs where happiness and prosperity prevailed everywhere so much so that the Lord’s rule became the bench mark and the gold standard for good governance for all generations to come’. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 20—to Doha no. 23; (ii) Doha no. 31 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it.}]

आयसु देहि मुदित मन माता । जेहिं मुद मंगल कानन जाता ॥ ७ ॥

जनि सनेह बस डरपसि भोरें । आनँदु अंब अनुग्रह तोरें ॥ ८ ॥

āyasu dēhi mudita mana mātā. jēhiṁ muda maṅgala kānana jātā. 7.
jani sanēha basa ḍarapasi bhōrēm. ānamḍu amba anugraha tōrēm. 8.

So therefore, oh mother, please grant me your permission with a cheerful heart so that I myself feel happy whilst proceeding to the forest (to honour my father's wish, and fulfill the duties assigned to me)¹. (7)

My dear mother (amba), please do not let your love for me frighten you at the (word 'forest', or the) prospect of my going to the forest, for by your grace and good wishes everything shall turn out fine for me.² (8)

[Note—¹The Lord has already hinted to Kaushalya that he is not at all sad or aggrieved by the orders of his father that he should go to the forest, for the Lord told her he was assigned the "kingdom of the forest by his father" as narrated herein above in verse no. 6.

All kingdoms are good and equal for a person who believes that he is merely carrying out his duties as a king as assigned to him by God, and that therefore he is supposed to rule the kingdom dispassionately and judiciously like a governor who is answerable to the Master who appoints him to look after the day-to-day affairs of the country on his behalf. In this case, the 'king' is the governor, and the appointing authority is God. This view ensures that the king does not treat the kingdom as his personal property, and its inhabitants as his personal servants or slaves. He would rule as per rule of law, with due compassion and welfare of everyone in mind so that his Master is pleased with his job and keeps him on the seat as a reward of doing a good duty.

Hence, as has been noted earlier, the 'kingdom of the forest' is as good as the 'kingdom of Ayodhya' for Lord Ram. He was happy to go to his new assignment. After all, it was the prerogative of the king (Dasrath) to decide whom to assign which task. His mother, therefore, should also be happy to grant him her unreserved permission.

The Lord told his mother that when she grants him her permission with a cheerful heart and mind, it would also make him cheerful while carrying out his duties in the forest. Otherwise, he would feel sad and remorseful whenever he remembers her sad face in the forest. So, would she like to make him sad by being sad herself? Or would she like that he live happily in the forest whenever he remembers her smiling face, as it would cheer him up instead of casting a pall of gloom upon him.

²Lord Ram was quick to perceive a sudden wave of shock, disbelief and grief that passed over the countenance of Kaushalya as soon as she heard the words that he was going to the 'forest' on the orders of his father.

Why, Lord Ram told her, she ought not to be scared at all, for she was the mother of a brave prince who should be bold, resilient and courageous enough under all sorts of circumstances, for life is not always honey and a bed of roses for her son who is expected to show his mettle whenever the right opportunity comes, for such rare chances would bring to him great glory and fame.

So therefore, in order to encourage her to become bold in the face of the challenge that she now faces, with the prospect of her dear son being sent to face the sufferings and uncertainties of life in the wilderness, Lord Ram tells her not to be swayed unduly by the mere mention of the word 'forest'. The Lord assures her that everything would be alright by her grace and blessings. She can't change anyone's destiny, but surely she can pray for him and bless him.

She ought to act like the mother of a truly brave prince, and not in a cowardly manner by weeping and wailing at a juncture of life when her son gets an opportunity to prove his worth.]

दो०. बरष चारिदस बिपिन बसि करि पितु बचन प्रमान ।
आइ पाय पुनि देखिहउँ मनु जनि करसि मलान ॥ ५३ ॥
dōhā.

baraṣa cāridasa bipina basi kari pitu bacana pramāna.
ā'i pāya puni dēkhiha'umṁ manu jani karasi malāna. 53.

Verily, after living in the forest for a period of fourteen years and fulfilling my father's words, I shall hasten back to you and see your august feet once again.

So, do not regret and make yourself gloomy and sad at all (on such a minor issue). [It's not worth it.]' (Doha no. 53)

चौ०. बचन बिनीत मधुर रघुबर के । सर सम लगे मातु उर करके ॥ १ ॥
सहमि सूखि सुनि सीतलि बानी । जिमि जवास परें पावस पानी ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

bacana binīta madhura raghubara kē. sara sama lagē mātu ura karakē. 1.
sahami sūkhi suni sītali bānī. jimi javāsa parēm pāvasa pānī. 2.

The politely spoken sweet words of Lord Ram, who was the most exalted in the illustrious family of king Raghu (raghubara), however became like an arrow that pierced through the heart of his mother (Kaushalya) and intensely hurt her. (1)

Hearing the calm and softly spoken words of the Lord, she became pale out of shock and dismay; the mother was taken aback and shriveled in the same way as the first shower of rain during the rainy season would cause the 'Javaas' plant to wilt and shed its leaves¹. (2)

[Note—¹Lord Ram had tried his best to avert any kind of shock to his mother, for not only did he speak calmly but he also showed no sign of sadness or dismay on his face when he told her that he has gladly accepted the new assignment given to him by his father, which was to rule the forested areas of the kingdom, and he had also exhorted her to cheerfully grant him her own permission so that he can fulfill his duties—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 53 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede it.

But nevertheless, after all Kaushalya was a 'mother', and it was natural for her to be shocked initially at the news that her beloved son was being sent to the wilderness, which of course no mother would want to happen. Eventually however, she would regain her composure and grant her dear son, Lord Ram, her permission, albeit with a heavy-as-lead heart, to do his duties and proceed to the forest.

Compare the noble character and good nature of Kaushalya now, and that of Sumitra, the mother of Laxman, a little while later on, with the evil and selfish one of

Kaikeyi—for whilst both Kaushalya and Sumitra showed exemplary patience and forbearance, instead of throwing any kind of tantrum, when they learnt that their sons, Lord Ram and Laxman respectively, are going to the forest on account of Kaikeyi and her son Bharat, Kaikeyi, on the other hand, has raised hell based on mere hearsay and an imaginary fear to the safety of her son and own self.

The ‘Javaas’ plant is a prickly plant that grows on the sandy banks of a river. When rain falls on it, its leaves dry up and fall down, and the plant itself wilts. It lies in this dried up condition till the end of the rainy season, i.e. roughly till the end of September, when it sprouts new leaves and comes to life again.

To wit, the irony with this plant is that whereas rain is said to bring universal cheer to all other plants, it brings grief to the Javaas plant, for instead of getting nourished and growing more during the rainy season, it dries up and sheds its leaves as if the rain is unwelcome for it and has hurt it. The botanical name of this plant is ‘Alhagi Comelorum’, and its common English name is ‘Arabian or Persian Manna Plant’. Its juice is used as a mild laxative in herbal medicine.

The metaphor of the Javaas plant is employed here to impress that even as the cool water of the rains has the effect of drying up this plant instead of making it thrive, the cool and soft words of Lord Ram had made his mother feel utterly shocked and sad instead of feeling happy.]

कहि न जाइ कछु हृदय बिषादू । मनहुँ मृगी सुनि केहरि नादू ॥ ३ ॥

नयन सजल तन थर थर काँपी । माजहि खाइ मीन जनु मापी ॥ ४ ॥

kahi na jā'i kachu hr̥daya biṣādū. manahum̐ mṛgī suni kēhari nādū. 3.
nayana sajala tana thara thara kām̐pī. mājahi khā'i mīna janu māpī. 4.

She (Kaushalya) was so stunned that she could not speak a word in reply, as her heart was overwhelmed with grief and distress just like a she deer who is shocked and filled with fear when she hears the roar of a lion (as she fears imminent death)¹. (3)

Her eyes were filled with tears, and her body shook violently as if she was intoxicated. Her condition was like that of a fish which imbibes the scum that has been raised in the water of a pond after the first showers of rain². (4)

[Note—¹Kaushalya was as shocked to hear the words of Lord Ram, that he was going to the forest, as a she deer would be when she hears the roar of the lion, for she fears that she won't be able to live any more as the lion is bound to devour her, although it may not be so, for the mere sound of the lion roaring in some part of the forest does not mean that it is coming to kill the terrified deer.

To wit, the very thought that Lord Ram would suffer immensely in the forest, that there might be danger to his life in the wilderness as he would have no one to help and support him there, shook Kaushalya to her core. She feared that the news of the Lord going alone to the forest was too big a shock for her to survive for long in its aftermath—just as the she deer fears she has not long to live as the lion is somewhere in the vicinity.

²The first shower of rain raises scum in the water of the pond. It is the result of fermentation of aquatic plants present in the water due to the heat and dampness in the

environment that occurs immediately after rain falls on hot earth. This scum is intoxicating just like liquor obtained after fermentation. When the fish inadvertently drinks it, it gets intoxicated and becomes unconscious, coming to the surface of the water, and often dies.

The condition of Kaushalya is compared to this fish in this verse. She is nervous and has lost the bearing of her mind.]

धरि धीरजु सुत बदनू निहारी । गदगद बचन कहति महतारी ॥ ५ ॥
 तात पितहि तुम्ह प्रानपिआरे । देखि मुदित नित चरित तुम्हारे ॥ ६ ॥
 राजु देन कहूँ सुभ दिन साधा । कहेउ जान बन केहिं अपराधा ॥ ७ ॥
 तात सुनावहु मोहि निदानू । को दिनकर कुल भयउ कृसानू ॥ ८ ॥

dhari dhīraju suta badanu nihārī. gadagada bacana kahati mahatārī. 5.
 tāta pitahi tumha prānapi'ārē. dēkhi mudita nita carita tumhārē. 6.
 rāju dēna kahum' subha dina sādha. kahē'u jāna bana kēhiṁ aparādhā. 7.
 tāta sunāvahu mōhi nidānū. kō dinakara kula bhaya'u kṛsānū. 8.

The mother, however, soon recovered herself and gathered enough courage to speak. She looked at her son's face intently, and spoke with an accent that showed her perplexity and dismay at the irrational decision of the king to send Lord Ram to the forest so suddenly, without assigning any reason whatsoever for this incredulous order of his. (5)

[When Kaushalya spoke to Lord Ram, she was so overwhelmed with emotions and so shocked that her voice was shaky, sniffled, cracked, guttural and croaky as if she had a bad sore throat.]

She said: 'My dear son (tāta)! You are very dear to your father, for he loves you as much as he loves his own life. He always feels exhilarated when he hears of your glories, excellent virtues, and noble character. (6)

He had decided to anoint you on the throne (just yesterday), and for this purpose he had even decided upon an auspicious day (which is today). Say then, I am completely confounded and it defies my comprehension for I am just unable to fathom as to what kind of mistake you might have committed which so much annoyed your father that he would so suddenly change his mind and inexplicably decide to send you to the forest instead. (7)

My dear son, I pray that you please tell me truthfully the reason for this order of your father. Prithee, tell me who has become a fire to burn down (or ruin) this Solar Race?' (8)

[Note—Kaushalya was stunned into disbelief that Lord Ram, whom his father loved so endearingly and who was praised by everyone for his good character, noble virtues and friendly nature, would be exiled to the forest overnight so suddenly, without as much as a warning or even telling him what his fault was. She asked Lord Ram to explain it to her. She said: "My darling. What is this that I hear; am I mishearing it? Why, thou art so dear to thy father, and he has always loved thee so much, he has

always felt exceptionally glad whenever he heard of thy good virtues and excellent character. So it beats me and I can't understand how cometh he wouldst so suddenly turn against thee; what is thy fault; what mistake havest thou made that hast so much annoyed thine father that he hast cast thee to the wilderness and thrown thee out of the city in such an unceremonious way? Tell me dear, who is the culprit; who hast conspired against thee; who wants to ruin this illustrious and harmonious family by acting on the commands of the Devil who is out to seek revenge upon thee, but prithee, for what cause?"']

दो०. निरखि राम रुख सचिवसुत कारनु कहेउ बुझाइ ।
सुनि प्रसंगु रहि मूक जिमि दसा बरनि नहिं जाइ ॥ ५४ ॥

dōhā.

nirakhi rāma rukha sacivasuta kāranu kahē'u bujhā'i.
suni prasaṅgu rahi mūka jimi dasā barani nahim jā'i. 54.

[Lord Ram did not reply directly, but gestured to his companion, the son of the kingdom's chief minister, i.e. Sumantra, who was standing nearby, to tell Kaushalya everything in brief. Hence—] Getting a hint from Lord Ram, the chief minister's son (who was accompanying the Lord)¹ politely told Kaushalya everything and explained the development to her.

When she heard the full incident, she became quiet as if dumbfounded and paralyzed. Her condition was so extremely distraught and dismal that it cannot be described in words. (Doha no. 54)

[Note—¹An interesting observation can be made here. We read here that Lord Ram was accompanied by 'the son of the chief minister' (*sacivasuta*). Well, it so happened that when the Lord and Sumantra emerged from the palace after meeting Dasrath and Kaikeyi, the minister was thronged by those who were standing at the palace gate and eager to know what the matter was. So, Sumantra hurriedly called his son, who was also in the surging crowd, and took him aside to brief him of the developments. Then Sumantra stayed back and sent his son instead to accompany Lord Ram who was going to his mother to seek her permission to proceed to the forest.

Remember: Sumantra had now a huge task and a grave responsibility on his hand; he was the chief minister of the kingdom, and in the context of this new and unexpected development he had to take charge of the administration of the kingdom, assume central command, and firmly stand his ground to prevent chaos and anarchy, or even a mutiny, from breaking out in the city. He was so busy that he told his son to accompany Lord Ram to Kaushalya's place, and leave him alone to tackle other urgent issues.

Another point to be noted here is that Lord Ram did not reply himself to his mother, but gestured to his companion, the chief minister's son, to answer Kaushalya on his behalf. Why did Lord Ram choose to deflect the query of his mother, and not answer her personally and directly? It is because she had asked a pointed question "who is the culprit; who is guilty for this mischief". Lord Ram did not want to answer this question himself—because it would mean he would have to point his fingers at Kaikeyi. The Lord thought it wise not to do so. He did not wish to add fuel to the

already raging fire of bitterness, hatred, jealousy, selfishness, discord and disharmony by personally getting involved in it by accusing Kaikeyi for all the misfortunes and turmoil she has caused.

Lord Ram did not wish to speak personally against Kaikeyi to discredit her, for the Lord's silence meant that he had nothing personally against anyone, and that he did not want to add anything to foment more trouble and aggravate the crisis further at a personal level in this matter, and that what's done is done, and since there is no going back on it so there is no point served in blaming anyone for it, for it is the fiat of fate and the writ of destiny that cannot be changed and must be accepted without rancour in heart.

To wit, he wanted to remain neutral, dispassionate and detached from everything as was his wont, and speaking on the cause of his forest exile and naming any particular individual as being the main culprit for this sordid development would have been against the very character of the Lord who was famed for the stellar virtues of equanimity and neutrality when dealing with the affairs of this mundane world.

Further, by asking his friend, the chief minister's son, to reply Kaushalya and brief her about everything, the Lord would get a chance to quietly observe her reaction, and if the need arises to quickly intervene to sort out the matter if it got out of hand. Remaining dispassionate and neutral would thus give the Lord a lot of leverage in handling this sensitive matter that had aroused so much passion all around him.]

चौ०. राखि न सकइ न कहि सक जाहू । दुहूँ भाँति उर दारुन दाहू ॥ १ ॥

लिखत सुधाकर गा लिखि राहू । बिधि गति बाम सदा सब काहू ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

rākhi na saka'i na kahi saka jāhū. duhūṁ bhānti ura dārūna dāhū. 1.
likhata sudhākara gā likhi rāhū. bidhi gati bāma sadā saba kāhū. 2.

Kaushalya was in a fix; she faced a great dilemma for she could not decide whether to ask her son, Lord Ram, to go to the forest or insist that he stays back at home.

Pondering over these two options created a great fire of grief, dismay and uncertainty in her heart, for she was undecided which would be good and a correct thing to do¹. (1)

She rued and lamented over the inexplicable ways of the Creator who would invariably create a situation of irony and paradox while writing the destiny of the subjects of his creation. For instance, while writing about the glories of the Moon he inserted the infamy caused by Rahu to him². (2)

[Note—¹Why was Kaushalya undecided on what would be the correct thing to do? This question is answered in the verses that follow herein below.

²The Rahu is the head of a demon that periodically devours the full silvery disc of the Moon, making the latter dark for some time. This phenomenon, according to ancient mythology, is the cause of the lunar eclipse. Kaushalya wondered what was the need for Brahma, the Creator, to unnecessarily introduce Rahu while deciding on the beauty of the Moon? It shows that the Creator derives some kind of sadistic pleasure

by injecting some mischief and nuisance in the otherwise calm and blissful life of an individual.

A similar idea is also expressed elsewhere in Ram Charit Manas where the many odd and unpredictable decisions of the Creator that oftentimes create a piquant situation are questioned. For instance, in (a) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 and Chanda line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 96, the mother of Parvati laments that the Creator had destined her to marry Lord Shiva who lives like an ascetic; and in (b) Ayodhya Kand, Chanda line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 201 where Nishad, the head of the boatman community, was comforting Bharat as the latter lamented at the immense misfortune that had befallen on his dear brother Lord Ram on his account.

In the present case of Lord Ram, Kaushalya lamented and wondered at the need for the Creator to unnecessarily cause this misfortune to happen when everything was set and finalized for the Lord's happy ascension on the throne, and a happy and peaceful life that he would have led thereafter.]

धरम सनेह उभयँ मति घेरी । भइ गति साँप छुछुंदरि केरी ॥ ३ ॥
 राखउँ सुतहि करउँ अनुरोधू । धरमु जाइ अरु बंधु बिरोधू ॥ ४ ॥
 कहउँ जान बन तौ बड़ि हानी । संकट सोच बिबस भइ रानी ॥ ५ ॥

dharama sanēha ubhayam̐ mati ghērī. bha'i gati sām̐pa chuchundari kērī. 3.
 rākha'um̐ sutahi kara'um̐ anurōdhū. dharamu jā'i aru bandhu birōdhū. 4.
 kaha'um̐ jāna bana tau baḍi hānī. saṅkaṭa sōca bibasa bha'i rānī. 5.

She was on the horns of a dilemma, undecided whether to uphold the principles of Dharma on the one hand, and be swayed by Love on the other hand¹.

Her mental condition was much like that of a snake who has caught hold of a musk-rat (for the snake neither wishes to let go of its prey on the one hand, nor is it able to gulp the rat down for its obnoxious smell and toxicity)². (3)

Kaushalya contemplated thus: 'In case I plead with the king to keep Lord Ram at home, it would amount to violating the principles of Dharma (which requires that one should not exert any kind of pressure on a senior person to force him into submission, especially when the latter happens to be a father of the affected person on one hand, and a husband of another on the other hand).

At the same time, it would mean opposition of Lord Ram to his own brother (Bharat, who would be prevented from getting the throne if the Lord is allowed to stay back, for then it is but natural that he would be anointed on the throne by the virtue of his seniority amongst the four brothers). (4)

On the other hand, meanwhile, if I tell him (Lord Ram) to proceed to the forest, then too it is a matter of grave concern as it would do great harm (to everyone).'

This was such a piquant situation that troubled Kaushalya much, making her pensive and remorseful, for either way there was nothing but pain and agony left for her. (5)

[Note—¹Kaushalya did not know what to do in the present situation. If she decided to uphold the tradition of Dharma (i.e. to follow the principles of good conduct, righteousness, probity and propriety) then she must not stop her son from obeying the

commands of his father, nor instigate him to disobey the orders of his other mother, i.e. Kaikeyi, because it was expected from Lord Ram that he treat all his mothers equally and show them equal respect.

Yet, on the other hand, the demands of love and affection were pushing Kaushalya to ask her son to not to abandon his mother who loves him so dearly, and who would not live or survive without him.

²It is believed that if a snake catches hold of a musk-rat to eat it, then it finds itself in a tremendous fix: for the rat's smell is so obnoxious that it makes the snake feel nauseous and like to vomit, but at the same time it does not wish to leave its food. It is also believed that if the snake lets the rat escape, then it would become blind, but if it gulps down the prey then it would vomit and die of poison present in the musk-rat's blood.]

बहुरि समुझि तिय धरमु सयानी । रामु भरतु दोउ सुत सम जानी ॥ ६ ॥

सरल सुभाउ राम महतारी । बोली बचन धीर धरि भारी ॥ ७ ॥

तात जाउँ बलि कीन्हेहु नीका । पितु आयसु सब धरमक टीका ॥ ८ ॥

bahuri samujhi tiya dharamu sayānī. rāmu bharatu dō'u suta sama jānī. 6.

sarala subhā'u rāma mahatārī. bōlī bacana dhīra dhari bhārī. 7.

tāta jā'um' bali kīnhēhu nīkā. pitu āyasu saba dharamaka ṭikā. 8.

Finally she came to the conclusion that it would be well and prudent for her to adhere to her obligations as a wife who ought not to defy her husband's wishes, and also the fact that she ought to treat Lord Ram and Bharat equally, as they being her own two sons¹. [This was unlike what Kaikeyi thought, brining in sharp contrast the character of Kaushalya and Kaikeyi.] (6)

The mother of Lord Ram had a very simple and pious nature. She comforted herself with great difficulty, and it also took great courage for her to speak to Lord Ram once again (after deciding in her mind what to do). (7)

Kaushalya said to Lord Ram: 'My dear son (tāta)! It is your right decision that you would go to the forest on the orders of your father, for the most honourable thing for a son to do is to obey his father, as it is the best step towards upholding the principles of Dharma. (8)

[Note—¹Kaushalya's response shows her magnanimous and benevolent nature, and the greatness of her heart, as compared to her counterpart Kaikeyi who was selfish and shortsighted, and who saw Bharat and Lord Ram with two different eyes that distinguished between them, for she treated Bharat as her own son whilst Lord Ram as the son of Kaushalya who was inimical to Bharat.

Kaushalya decided that for her, both Lord Ram and Bharat are equal, and if one of her sons goes to the forest, it does not matter to her because she still has the other son to shower her love upon. This would be abundantly evident in due course when we read how she lovingly treated Bharat, and how Bharat reciprocated her affection by similarly showing his love for her, when he went to meet Kaushalya upon

his return to Ayodhya after the death of Dasrath. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 163—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 169.}}

दो०. राजु देन कहि दीन्ह बनु मोहि न सो दुख लेसु।

तुम्ह बिनु भरतहि भूपतिहि प्रजहि प्रचंड कलेसु ॥ ५५ ॥

dōhā.

rāju dēna kahi dīnha banu mōhi na sō dukha lēsu.

tumha binu bharatahi bhūpatihi prajahi pracaṇḍa kalēsu. 55.

Verily indeed and in all sooth I tell you that I have no trace of regret or any kind of dismay in the least that the king had first declared that he would anoint you to the throne, and then suddenly telling you to go to the forest instead.

What concerns me more and bothers me much is another thing: for it is certain that Bharat, the King (Dasrath) and the subjects of the kingdom—all will suffer immensely and tormented hugely without you.’ (Doha no. 55)

[Note—The noble character and the large heart of Kaushalya is very evident here. She does not regret that her dear son is going to the forest, but she greatly regrets the immensity of sorrows it would cause on others, such as Bharat, Dasrath, and the rest of the people of Ayodhya.

She expresses her agony in the following words: “My dear, it is alright with me that thou art going to the forest on thy father’s orders. I am rather pleased with thee that thou hast done a right thing by obeying thine father, which is a most honourable and noble thing to do. I also have no regret that thy father hast suddenly cast thee out of the kingdom and debarred thee from thine right to the throne even after making a public proclamation in this regard, but what fills me with pain and sorrow is the fallout of the king’s decision, for everyone loves thee so much and so deeply that thine absence wouldst be too much for them to find peace in life, and everyone wouldst grieve and lead a tormented life when they do not find thee amongst them, and this includes thy brother Bharat and thy father too. My dearest son, this thought burns mine heart and pains me intensely.”]

चौ०. जौं केवल पितु आयसु ताता । तौ जनि जाहु जानि बड़ि माता ॥ १ ॥

जौं पितु मातु कहेउ बन जाना । तौ कानन सत अवध समाना ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

jauṁ kēvala pitu āyasu tāta. tau jani jāhu jāni baḍi mātā. 1.

jauṁ pitu mātu kahē’u bana jānā. tau kānana sata avadha samānā. 2.

Kaushalya told Lord Ram: ‘My dear son (tātā)! If it is only thy father who hast given thee the order to proceed to the forest, then please don’t go, because thou must understand that a mother occupies a higher rank and is more venerable than one’s father. (1)

On the other hand, if both thine father and mother hast told thee to go to the forest (i.e. if it is the unanimous decision of both your parents that thou shouldst move to the forest), then the forest (is the best place for thee to live in, and it) should be treated by thee as being equivalent to hundreds of Ayodhyas taken together (for parents know what is best for their son)¹. (2)

[Note—¹Once again, Kaushalya advises Lord Ram to treat Kaikeyi on the same footing as he would treat his own mother Kaushalya when she says that “if it is the unanimous decision of your father as well as your mother” that you must go to the forest, then surely you must obey them without a second thought.

From a close examination of this statement of Kaushalya it is clear that when the chief minister’s son briefed her about the developments and why Lord Ram wants to go to the forest, he deftly avoided blaming Kaikeyi directly as being the primary culprit behind the whole evil turn of events and the Lord’s exile to the forest— for the simple reason that if he had clarified who first wanted that Lord Ram should proceed to the forest, and Bharat anointed on the throne instead, Kaushalya wouldn’t have been in doubt as to whether it was the wish of the king alone to send Lord Ram to the forest, or it was the joint decision of both Dasrath and Kaikeyi.

Being aware of Kaikeyi’s selfish and pervert nature, Kaushalya could understand that she would want her son to grab the crown; it was okay. But that she would stoop so low in her wickedness, become so ruthless and merciless in her heart that she would throw the harmless Lord Ram to the forest where he would certainly facing immense sufferings like the ones he had never ever experienced in his life since birth, was something that Kaushalya just could not believe was true.

So, she wanted to ascertain whether it was the joint order of both the parents of Lord Ram that he must go to the forest, or if it was Dasrath alone who had ordered it. In the latter case, she advised her son not to obey his father— because a mother is more revered and must be shown more respect as compared to one’s father.

It is a very clear hint to Lord Ram that Kaushalya does not want him to go to the forest.]

पितु बनदेव मातु बनदेवी । खग मृग चरन सरोरुह सेवी ॥ ३ ॥
 अंतहुँ उचित नृपहि बनबासू । बय बिलोकि हियँ होइ हराँसू ॥ ४ ॥
 बड़भागी बनू अवध अभागी । जो रघुबंसतिलक तुम्ह त्यागी ॥ ५ ॥

pitu banadēva mātu banadēvī. khaga mṛga carana sarōruha sēvī. 3.
 antahum’ ucita nṛpahi banabāsū. baya bilōki hiyam’ hō’i harām’sū. 4.
 barabhāgī banu avadha abhāgī. jō raghubansatilaka tumha tyāgī. 5.

[Kaushalya waited for a moment for a reply, and seeing that her son was silent it became evident to her that the order to go to the forest was from both his parents, king Dasrath and mother Kaikeyi, and therefore Lord Ram was obliged to obey the command. So, in this verse, the distraught and saddened mother comforts her son not to worry and fear for anything in the forest, because like he had his parents at home to look after his interests and protect him, he would find similar parents in the wilds too in the from of the male and female deities of the forest who would look after him and afford their protection to him.]

Kaushalya comforted Lord Ram and reassured him when she said: ‘Oh son, in the wilds thy wilt find parents too in the form of the male and female deities of the forest whom thou shouldst treat as thine father and mother respectively, and show due regards to them in the same manner. They wouldst personally protect thee and look after thee. Not only this, thou wouldst be served faithfully by the animals and birds of the forest who wouldst be devoted to thy feet (like the servants who serve thee here in Ayodhya).

[To wit, my dear son, don’t think that thy art alone and without anyone to protect and help thee in the wilderness, for the deities residing there would be thy parents who wouldst extend their protective umbrella over thine head. As far as someone needed to serve thee, don’t worry, for the countless animals and birds wouldst be there to do thy bidding and keep thee happy.] (3)

Verily, it is in order (and also advised by the scriptures) that a king ought to go to the forest to dwell there during the last quarter of his life (which is called ‘Vanprastha’—proceeding to the forest)¹.

The only thing that causes so much pain in my heart and fills it with immense sorrows is that thou art of a young age. (4)

[Truly I say without reservations that—] The forest is very fortunate and blessed, whilst Ayodhya is cursed and unfortunate because it is being abandoned by thee, who art the most exalted son in the illustrious race descending from the ancient king Raghu (raghubansatilaka).

[To wit, the forest is very lucky and fortunate that thy havest chosen to live there instead of at Ayodhya. How cursed is this city and the kingdom which thou havest decided to discard in favour of the wilds. Surely, the forest must be more attractive and wholesome than the cursed city and kingdom of Ayodhya for it is being deprived of thine august presence, for thou havest thought it fit to leave this wretched and barren place and go to live in the pleasant environment of the verdant forest instead.] (5)

[Note—¹According to the system laid down by the scriptures, the life of a (Hindu) man was divided into four quarters by ancient sages, forefathers and patriarchs of the society. These four quarters are the following—Brahmcharya, Grihastha, Vaanprastha and Sanyas. Each quarter was of approximately 20-25 years.

The first quarter is when a man was supposed to study and learn the skills that are needed for the affairs of an adult life. This was ‘Brahmcharya Ashram’. The word literally means a celibate and one who exercises self-restraint. This was essential for study and inculcating skills which require focus of mind and heart. During this time, the man is is young and is supposed to observe austerities while he studies and acquires knowledge to equip him to face the world when he grows up

The second quarter is ‘Grihastha Ashram’. It is when the student enters the household phase of life. He marries, raises a family and carries on with his profession or vocation to increase wealth and progeny.

When a person becomes ripe in age, his working capacity decreases and he must prepare to pass on the baton to the next generation, to his heirs when they are ready to step in his shoes, and when he has done his bit for society. This is the ‘Vaanprastha Ashram’—the third phase of life when when a person prepares to hand

the responsibilities of his worldly affairs to his heirs and mentally prepares himself to lead a calm and detached life so that he can get ready for the final phase of old age.

Though it literally means 'heading for the forest', but not necessarily it be so. Its primary function is to withdraw from playing an active role in the affairs of the world and give one's mind and body rest and peace after the toil of the previous years. In ancient times though, it actually meant going to the forest and spending time in a serene place in some hermitage. But in modern times it is neither feasible nor advisable. The best avenue is to withdraw from active role and serve more as an advisor and guide for the next generation in a dispassionate manner.

The final and fourth quarter is called 'Sanyas Ashram' which clearly means absolute withdrawal from the world and its affairs. This is the time when the man is of about say 70 or more years of age. So he needs complete peace and should prepare to make an exit from the world without a fuss. He is expected to create such a situation that no one misses or wails for him nor anything suffers due to his absence. Thus, he dies peacefully and self-contentedly.

During the 'Sanyas Ashram' a person is expected to completely renounce the world and its entanglements, and instead spend the remaining part of his life in spiritual pursuit and searching ways for his spiritual liberation and deliverance.

Now, let us study them in a little more detail.

(a) Brahmacharya¹—this is the 1st phase of life in which a person studies the scriptures under the tutelage of a wise teacher. This phase of life is marked by austerities, keeping of vows, observing celibacy, abstinence and continence as well as leading a regimental life style of a boarding school.

(b) Grihastha—when a person has studied and prepared himself to face the world, he comes back to his house and enters the 2nd phase called Grihastha Ashram which is a householder's life. He marries, raises a family, produces wealth and helps to carry forward the cycle of creation. This is the most important and enjoyable phase as well as the most tough one because on the one hand there are the comforts and pleasure of the world to be enjoyed, and on the other hand there are the various tribulations and miseries of a family life alongside the dealings with this deceptive world with all its accompanying horrifying problems.

(c) Vanprastha—this is the 3rd phase when a man hands over the responsibilities of the world to his heirs and renounces his attachments to the house as well as the world, and heads for the forest, leaving the home for his next generation. It is now that he goes on pilgrimage and prepares for the final stage of his life, and

(d) Sanyas—this is the 4th and last stage of life when there is complete cutting-off of all the ties with the world, spending time in contemplation and meditation, living a life of total renunciation, and begging for food for survival while single mindedly endeavouring for emancipation and salvation. This phase of Sanyas also has many stages depending upon the spiritual elevation and accomplishments of the aspirant, viz. Kutichak, Bahudak, Hansa, Paramhans, Turiyatit and Avadhut.]

जौं सुत कहौं संग मोहि लेहू । तुझरे हृदयँ होइ संदेहू ॥ ६ ॥

पूत परम प्रिय तुम्ह सबही के । प्रान प्रान के जीवन जी के ॥ ७ ॥

ते तुम्ह कहहु मातु बन जाऊँ । मैं सुनि बचन बैठि पछिताऊँ ॥ ८ ॥

jaum̐ suta kahaum̐ saṅga mōhi lēhū. tumharē hṛdayam̐ hō'i sandēhū. 6.
 pūta parama priya tumha sabahī kē. prāna prāna kē jīvana jī kē. 7.
 tē tumha kahahu mātu bana jā'ūm̐. mair̐ suni bacana baiṭhi pachitā'ūm̐. 8.

Oh son (suta), if I ask thee to take me along to the forest, it may cause some doubts in thine heart¹. [So therefore, I won't make such a request.] (6)

Thou art a son (pūta) who is loved by one and all. Nay, not only this, but thou art dearer to everyone more than their own lives. (7)

This being the case, why shouldst I be sitting and regretting when thy sayest that thou art going to the forest; there is no cause for it?

[To wit, since thou art loved by everyone, why should I worry for thee whilst thou art in the forest? Well, all those who dwell there would take proper care of thine needs and safety. Further, why should I harbour any kind of ill-will for anyone here in Ayodhya, for do I naught wot that thou art very dear to everyone, more so to thine parents*, so surely by sending thee to the forest it was deemed by them that it would be for thy good. So, where is the cause for me to regret and feel remorseful, that I sit down to lament or weep?]² (8)

[Note—¹What would be the cause of doubt in Lord Ram's heart that Kaushalya hints at? For one, it would mean that she does not feel safe in Ayodhya without him, but this would be an erroneous conclusion on her part and it would cast aspersions on the honesty and character of all others in the royal household as well as the kingdom, as it would mean that she does not trust her husband Dasrath, her queen-sister Sumitra, her other Bharat and his brothers, as well as a long list of well-wishers and servants and ministers and senior citizens who are staunchly loyal, obedient and faithful to her, and who would sympathize with her all the more now that Lord Ram has gone to the forest.

Another reason for Kaushalya's reluctance to put forth this request, that the Lord should take her along with him to the forest, is that it would put him in great dilemma. The Lord would not know what to do, whether to refuse to accept her request, in which case he would be committing disobedience to his own mother, and if he accept her request it would add to his problems and worries manifold times as life in the wilderness is not easy even in the best of times, and with his mother in toe the Lord would be subjected to immeasurable difficulties that cannot be imagined.

So therefore, it was not proper for his mother to do anything that would only add to Lord Ram's miseries, woes and troubles instead of alleviating them a bit.

Besides this, Kaushalya has just told Lord Ram that the deities of the forest would be his de-facto parents and they would take care of him, and that the animals and birds there would serve him like faithful servants, so what was the need for her to accompany him in order to do what she could to look after him and give him comfort there?

²Kaushalya wants that Lord Ram's parting with her is on a cheerful note. She wishes to assure her son that she has no regrets or grievances, and neither is she lamenting at his going to the forest. So he must depart happily and cheerfully. She says that she is fully convinced that his being sent to the forest would be in his own interest in the long run, for she knows that everyone loves him, and no one would therefore do

anything that would be against his interests when she says * “---do I not know you are very dear to everyone, more so to your parents---”.

Just imagine the poignancy of the situation: Kaushalya’s heart was almost bursting at its seams with grief, yet she puts up a brave face, pretending that she has nothing to regret at her son going to the forest, for she does not want that he should remember her dismal and saddened countenance that was overburdened with grief after he has parted from her, as this memory would keep him tormented and sad throughout his period in the forest.]

दो०. यह बिचारि नहिं करउँ हठ झूठ सनेहु बड़ाइ ।

मानि मातु कर नात बलि सुरति बिसरि जनि जाइ ॥ ५६ ॥

dōhā.

yaha bicāri nahim kara'um̐ haṭha jhūṭha sanēhu baṛhā'i.
māni mātu kara nāta bali surati bisari jani jā'i. 56.

So (oh my dearest son), keeping what I havest told thee (herein above) in mind, I shalt naught pretend to love thee more than anyone else and try to impose anything on thee (such as to insist that thou takest me along with thee to the forest).

But however, I wouldst nevertheless ask thee to keep me in thy thoughts for me being thine mother, and forget me naught!’ (Doha no. 56)

[Note—The sadness in Kaushalya’s heart and the depth of her grief as are evident in these verses have been depicted by Goswami Tulsidas poetically elsewhere also in one of his other classical narration of the Story of the Ramayana which is called “Geetawali Ramayan”, in its Ayodhya Kand, verse nos. 2-4. This full book has also been published in English independently by this humble author.]

चौ०. देव पितर सब तुम्हहि गोसाईं । राखहुँ पलक नयन की नाई ॥ १ ॥

अवधि अंबु प्रिय परिजन मीना । तुम्ह करुनाकर धरम धुरीना ॥ २ ॥

अस बिचारि सोइ करहु उपाई । सबहि जिअत जेहिं भेंटहु आई ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

dēva pitara saba tumhahi gōsā'īm. rākhahum̐ palaka nayana kī nā'īm. 1.
avadhi ambu priya parijana mīnā. tumha karunākara dharama dhurīnā. 2.
asa bicāri sō'i karahu upāī. sabahi ji'ata jēhim bhēṇṭahu āī. 3.

[Blessing her son Lord Ram, Kaushalya continued—] ‘Oh revered Lord (gōsā'īm)! Let all the heavenly gods and spirits of ancestors take care of and protect thee just like the eyes that are protected by the eyelids¹. (1)

The period of thine forest exile (of fourteen years) is like the water, and those who love thee, those who art thine near and dear ones are like the fish that lives in this water. As for thine self, thou art a mine of mercy and compassion, as well as well-versed and steadfast in upholding the principles of Dharma². (2)

Thinking of it and keeping this fact in mind, please devise a formula that thou shalt return home to find everyone alive.

[To wit, if thou dost naught come back at the end of fourteen years, then be certain that thou wilt not find anyone alive here, because the ‘water’ wouldst have dried up or drained off, and so all the fish living in it wouldst also have died.]³ (3)

[Note—¹The eyelids would shut down automatically if they see anything would cause any harm or hurt to the eye. For instance, they would protect the eye from any harm or damage from the sun’s light by involuntarily narrowing down their opening and almost shutting the eye from the glare of the sun. If anyone brings his fist near the eye then also the eyelids would shut down automatically.

Mother Kaushalya says that in the same manner, Lord Ram would be protected by the gods and spirits of his ancestors.

²Kaushalya says that being a merciful and most compassionate Lord of all, as well as being diligent in doing his duties according to the Laws of Dharma (i.e. the principles of righteous behaviour, auspicious thoughts, good conduct, probity and propriety), it is expected of Lord Ram that he would keep in mind that none of those who love him and remember him during the long years of his forest sojourn when he remains away from them are made to suffer the agony of separation from him after this period ends.

We shall read later on that Lord Ram would assure Sita, his wife, that he would come back as soon as this period of fourteen years of forest exile ended—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 62.

The Lord has also affirmed the same thing, that he would come back as soon as the designated time ended, to Dasrath too while seeking his father’s permission to proceed to the forest—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 46.

At the end of the War of Lanka, he tells his companions who were present at the battle field that he has to return straightaway to Ayodhya, because the time was running out, and if he delays by even a day, he won’t find Bharat alive—apropos: Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chanda line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 116.

³Kaushalya compares the period of fourteen years of Lord Ram’s absence as ‘water’ in which the citizens would live like ‘fish’—i.e. they will live contented in the hope that their beloved Lord would return to them as soon as this period ended. But however, if the Lord fails to come back for any reason whatsoever, then he should be certain that he will find no one alive because this symbolic water representing the fourteen years of his absence would have dried up or drained off, leaving not a ‘drop’, meaning even a day, which would enable the ‘fish’, meaning the citizens, to survive any longer.

This fact is explicitly mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 86 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it.]

जाहु सुखेन बनहि बलि जाऊँ । करि अनाथ जन परिजन गाऊँ ॥ ४ ॥

सब कर आजु सुकृत फल बीता । भयउ कराल कालु बिपरीता ॥ ५ ॥

बहुबिधि बिलपि चरन लपटानी । परम अभागिनि आपुहि जानी ॥ ६ ॥

jāhu sukhēna banahi bali jā'ūṁ. kari anātha jana parijana gā'ūṁ. 4.
saba kara āju sukr̥ta phala bītā. bhaya'u karāla kālu biparītā. 5.
bahubidhi bilapi carana lapaṭānī. parama abhāgini āpuhi jānī. 6.

[The disconsolate mother Kaushalya was overwhelmed with grief when she said further—] ‘I say solemnly that whilst thou wouldst be proceeding to the forest (to fulfill thine obligations and answer the call of duty), thee wouldst be leaving behind distraught and disconsolate people, thy servants, thy family and the whole citizenry of Ayodhya. (4)

Verily indeed, in all sooth and without gainsay, all the good fortunes of the people that had accumulated over a long period of time and had made them so lucky and blessed as to have thee amidst them, seems to have been exhausted today, and the tide of time appears to have turned hostile towards them, because from now onwards a bleak future marked by abject misery, grief and pain stares the same people in their faces (in thy absence).’ (5)

In this way, the disconsolate and distraught mother wailed and grieved and lamented in many ways even as she fell down at the feet of Lord Ram and clasped it (or literally ‘wrapped her arms around the Lord’s feet’—“carana lapaṭānī”). She felt that she was exceedingly unfortunate and cursed. (6)

दारुन दुसह दाहु उर व्यापा । बरनि न जाहिं बिलाप कलापा ॥ ७ ॥
राम उठाई मातु उर लाई । कहि मृदु बचन बहुरि समुझाई ॥ ८ ॥

dārūna dusaha dāhu ura byāpā. barani na jāhiṁ bilāpa kalāpā. 7.
rāma uṭhā'i mātu ura lā'i. kahi mṛdu bacana bahuri samujhā'i. 8.

Kaushalya’s dismayed heart was overwhelmed with a wave of terrible grief and a sharp stab of pain so intense that it was unbearable for her; it is not possible to describe her plight and pitiable condition as she wept, wailed, lamented and grieved on that occasion¹. (7)

Lord Ram (who was very merciful and compassionate by his nature, could not stand this sight, though he had to harden himself as he was bound by the call of duty; so he --) lifted his mother (who was lying at his feet) and clasped her to his bosom most lovingly. The Lord spoke to her very politely and soothingly, and he comforted her in many ways (by explaining the pros and cons of the situation)². (8)

[Note—¹The poignancy of those moments, the intensity of pain and sadness in Kaushalya’s distraught heart, and her helpless and hapless condition, when she had to toughen herself sufficiently to maintain an exterior of calm but was boiling with grief within, is brought to the fore a little while later when Lord Ram once again bowed before her to take his final leave of her—refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand,

Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 68—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 69.

²What could have Lord Ram told Kaushalya to encourage her to stop feeling so sad, not to regret, and gather courage and forbearance so this bad time could be overcome?

Well, in the absence of any direct hint, we can make some logical points in this aspect. First, Lord Ram told her the main reason of his becoming a human being, which was done on the prayers of the gods, sages and the mother earth to liberate them from the terror of the cruel demons who were making life hell for every one on earth as well as in heaven, and to fulfill this obligation it was necessary for the Lord to go to the forest. Did Kaushalya not know this fact? Had she not seen his cosmic form and asserted it herself at the moment of the Lord's revelation when she had asked him to assume the form of an ordinary child—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 192 along with Chanda line nos. 1-16 that precede it.

Second, he had to fulfill the wishes of countless hermits, ascetics, sages and other pious souls living in the forests and doing Tapa (austerities and penances) in the hope that one day in their lives they would have the chance to be blessed by the Supreme Being himself.

Thirdly, it will give him an opportunity to personally understand the affairs of state in the hinterland and the far-flung realms of the kingdom, to interact with the people and understand their problems directly and personally, to see what improvements are needed in the administration of the kingdom at its grassroots level, so that this knowledge and experience would come handy to him and stand him in good stead when he actually ascends the throne of Ayodhya to become its King-Emperor, for then he would be able to take effective steps to remove any shortcomings that he would find during his stay in the countryside.

Four, this period of fourteen years should not be treated as any kind of punishment or banishment for him, but as a period of training and internship for a prince wherein he gets a first hand knowledge and experience of life of the common man living away from the glitter and pomp of a capital city of a huge kingdom (Ayodhya in this case), so that as its King-Emperor later on he would be able to eventually establish a successful rule catering to the welfare of his subjects on a wider scale.

Five, his willingly leaving the throne vacant for Bharat would serve two purposes: viz, one, it would show him how Bharat reacts, and two, it would show that he himself loves Bharat very much.

Six, it will give a chance to the people to get accustomed to a life without him, for no one can predict or presume what future has in store for a king. So therefore, in case some misfortune overtakes him while he rules the kingdom as its king, the people ought to be experienced enough to tackle the situation prudently and wisely, without getting too emotionally upset about it—because a kingdom lives beyond the life of a particular king.

Seven, if Lord Ram decides to stay and not proceed to the forest, it would mean defying his parents' wish, which would not be a good thing by any count. It would also mean that he is greedy for the crown, that he does not want Bharat to have it, that all that is said about his excellent character and noble virtues are false, and merely hearsay and heresy.

Eight, as far as Lord Ram's safety in the forest is concerned, can anyone harm the Lord who is the Supreme Authority in this creation—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 7-9 that precede Doha no. 6; (ii) Chaupai line nos.

1, 4-7 that precede Doha no. 7; (iii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 56; (iv) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 63.

So, in essence, Lord Ram told his mother, Kaushalya, that she need not worry for him or his security, and that everything would turn out fine.]

दो०. समाचार तेहि समय सुनि सीय उठी अकुलाइ ।
जाइ सासु पद कमल जुग बंदि बैठि सिरु नाइ ॥ ५७ ॥

dōhā.

samācāra tēhi samaya suni sīya uṭhī akulā'i.
jā'i sāsū pada kamala juga bandi baiṭhi siru nā'i. 57.

Meanwhile, when this news reached Sita (the wife of Lord Ram) at that time, she got up instantly in great agitation and perplexity. She hurried to her mother-in-law's (i.e. Kaushalya's) place, bowed at her feet, and sat down with a lowered head¹. (Doha no. 57)

[Note—¹The dreadful news of Lord Ram being sent to the forest spread rapidly everywhere. Someone informed Sita about it. No sooner she heard it but she got up with a start, and without wasting any time she rushed to meet her mother-in-law as she was told that her husband, Lord Ram, is with her to get her permission to proceed to the forest. On her way she decided that she would accompany her dear Lord, no matter what comes in the way; this will be evident in the verses that follow herein below.]

चौ०. दीन्हि असीस सासु मृदु बानी । अति सुकुमारि देखि अकुलानी ॥ १ ॥
बैठि नमितमुख सोचति सीता । रूप रासि पति प्रेम पुनीता ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

dīnhi asīsa sāsū mṛdu bānī. ati sukulāri dēkhi akulānī. 1.
baiṭhi namitamukha sōcati sītā. rūpa rāsi pati prēma punītā. 2.

The mother-in-law (sāsū) blessed her (Sita) with a sweet voice, but at the same time she was very upset when she beheld Sita's delicate form¹. (1)

Meanwhile, Sita sat pensively with a bowed head. She was a fount of beauty as well as purity of love (and devotion) for her husband (Lord Ram). (2)

[Note—¹Kaushalya immediately understood what was in the mind of Sita; she could easily guess that Sita wanted to go to the forest with her husband as would be clear in the verses that follow herein below.

This certainty of Sita being determined to follow her husband to the wilds filled Kaushalya with great distress and dismayed her beyond measure. It was all the more exacerbated when she considered the delicate frame of her daughter-in-law, for

she was not at all suited for a life of hardship, a life of rough and toil that one has to endure in the forest.]

चलन चाहत बन जीवननाथू । केहि सुकृती सन होइहि साथू ॥ ३ ॥
की तनु प्राण कि केवल प्राणा । बिधि करतबु कछु जाइ न जाना ॥ ४ ॥

calana cahata bana jīvananāthū. kēhi sukr̥tī sana hō'ihī sāthū. 3.
kī tanu prāna ki kēvala prānā. bidhi karatabu kachu jā'i na jānā. 4.

While Sita sat brooding, she reflected on the developments, and the following thoughts passed through her mind: 'My dear husband, who is the Lord of my very existence (jīvananāthū) (and therefore, I cannot survive without him), wants to go to the forest. I wonder what good fortune will enable me to accompany him. (3)

Is the 'Pran' (i.e. dynamic forces of life) that is present inside one's body the only thing that keeps a person alive¹?

Verily, the ways of the Creator are very mysterious and whimsical that no one can be certain about them². (4)

[Note—¹Sita contemplates thus: "Is there no other thing which has an equal importance for a person to keep him alive as the Pran that is present inside his or her body? Surely, the answer is "yes", for there are indeed other factors that too play an equally important role in a person's life like the person's Pran.

To wit, the breath, a synonym of Pran, the vital wind forces present inside the body of a living being, can keep the body alive, but if there is no mental peace and happiness, if one is torn away from one's near and dear ones without whom a single moment is impossible to pass, then say, what good is such a life? It is as good as a dead man is virtually kept alive by artificial means; it's a life lived like a member of the vegetable kingdom. Truly speaking, it's worth not living it. Say, is there even a remote chance of me surviving without my dear husband, Lord Ram? Surely, the answer is 'no'."

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8 and Chanda line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 96; (b) Ayodhya Kand, (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 48; (iii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 49; (iv) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 58; (v) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 119; (vi) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 206.

All these verses point to the paradoxical ways of the Creator and his whimsical way of doing things.]

चारु चरन नख लेखति धरनी । नूपुर मुखर मधुर कबि बरनी ॥ ५ ॥
मनहुँ प्रेम बस बिनती करहीं । हमहि सीय पद जनि परिहरहीं ॥ ६ ॥

cāru carana nakha lēkhati dharanī. nūpura mukhara madhura kabi baranī. 5.
manahum̐ prēma basa binatī karahīm̐. hamahi sīya pada jani pariharahīm̐. 6.

Sita looked intently at the ground and nervously scratched it with the end of her toenails. As she moved her legs, the soft sound emanating from her anklets is described by the poets¹ --- [5]

--- To mean that they appeared to plead, most affectionately and earnestly, that they may not be separated from the feet of Sita² [6]. (5-6)

[Note—¹In this analogy a ‘poet’ is invoked because a poet is a skilled wordsmith who is adept in employing metaphors and similes to bring focus to the point he wants to make, albeit in an indirect way. A poet is able to interpret emotions and sentiments better than anyone else. He can paint a word-picture that brings to life a situation that is subtle and non-physical, such as the secret thoughts of the mind and the emotions of the heart, that needs being described vividly, in as clear a term as seeing it in the physical world.

²Here, the poet is Tulsidas himself who has written this epic version of the Story of Lord Ram, and he wants to say that while Sita sat quietly, without saying a word, but her intentions were crystal clear. The sound of the anklets seemed to convey what was in the mind of Sita—that she does not want to be separated from Lord Ram; that she does not want to be debarred from serving the feet of her dear husband who is the Lord of her very existence.]

मंजु बिलोचन मोचति बारी । बोली देखि राम महतारी ॥ ७ ॥
तात सुनहु सिय अति सुकुमारी । सासु ससुर परिजनहि पिआरी ॥ ८ ॥

manju bilōcana mōcati bārī. bōlī dēkhi rāma mahatārī. 7.
tāta sunahu siya ati sukumārī. sāsū sasura parijanahi pi'ārī. 8.

Tears rolled down her (Sita's) beautiful eyes. Watching her, Lord Ram's mother (Kaushalya) said (to Lord Ram). (7)

‘My dear son (tāta), listen to me. Sita is exceptionally delicate in body. She is the beloved of her mother-in-law, her father-in-law, as well as all other members of the family and the royal household. (8)

दो०. पिता जनक भूपाल मनि ससुर भानुकुल भानु ।
पति रबिकुल कैरव बिपिन बिधु गुन रूप निधानु ॥ ५८ ॥

dōhā.

pitā janaka bhūpāla mani sasura bhānukula bhānu.
pati rabikula kairava bipina bidhu guna rūpa nidhānu. 58.

Her (Sita's) father is king Janak, who is a jewel amidst the fraternity of kings. Her father-in-law is similarly renowned as he is like the sun in the Solar Race (i.e. Dasrath is the most outstanding member of the family belonging to the Solar Race).

Her husband (Lord Ram) is like a full moon for the family of lilies symbolizing members of the same Solar Race. [To wit, just as the moon makes the lily happy because this flower would open up and spread its petals under the light of the full moon, so does Lord Ram gladdens the heart of everyone in the illustrious family belonging to the Solar Race.]

Verily indeed, her husband is also an ocean of excellent virtues and noble characters.¹ (Doha no. 58)

[Note—¹Kaushalya praises Sita, highlighting her high pedigree and stature. She is not an ordinary princess, for all her close family members are renowned, are highly esteemed, and occupy high positions in society. She is building up a case in favour of the argument that Sita is not eligible to suffer going to the forest. So therefore, what has Lord Ram to say on this matter, wonders Kaushalya. This is evident in Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 59—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 60 herein below.]

चौ०. मैं पुनि पुत्रबधू प्रिय पाई । रूप रासि गुन सील सुहाई ॥ १ ॥

नयन पुतरि करि प्रीति बढ़ाई । रखेउँ प्रान जानकिहिं लाई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

mair̥m puni putrabadhū priya pā'ī. rūpa rāsi guna sīla suhā'ī. 1.

nayana putari kari prīti baṛhā'ī. rākhē'um̃ prāna jānakihiṁ lā'ī. 2.

[Kaushalya continued—] 'I am fortunate to have found in her a loving and very dear daughter-in-law who is a fount of beauty, and who is very virtuous and polite. (1)

She is like the very iris of my eyes, and I have loved her as much. So, verily indeed, I can survive and keep myself alive (in Lord Ram's absence) by embracing Janki (Sita; the daughter of king Janak)¹. (2)

[Note—¹A person loves his eyes very much because without it he is blind. Within the instrument of the eye, the iris is very important as one is able to see the world through the pupil located in its middle. If the iris or its pupil becomes affected by some disease, a person becomes blind. For a blind person, life is a burden. He can do without many other organs of the body, but without the eye life is too difficult to cope with.

Kaushalya here means that she may be able to survive her long separation from Lord Ram if Sita remains with her, for her daughter-in-law would be a prop that would encourage Kaushalya to keep her hopes alive of seeing her son once again. But if Sita goes away, then her life would be as miserable as that of a blind man who loses his walking stick.]

कलपबेलि जिमि बहुबिधि लाली । सींचि सनेह सलिल प्रतिपाली ॥ ३ ॥

फूलत फलत भयउ बिधि बामा । जानि न जाइ काह परिनामा ॥ ४ ॥

kalapabēli jimi bahubidhi lālī. sīñci sanēha salila pratipālī. 3.
phūlata phalata bhaya'u bidhi bāmā. jāni na jā'i kāha parināmā. 4.

I had very affectionately taken good care of her (Sita) and showered my love on her just like one would water and nourish an evergreen creeper (kalapabēli—that bears flowers and leaves all round the year) in his home. (3)

But unfortunately, when the time came for the evergreen tree, around which this creeper was wound, to bear flowers and fruits, the Creator suddenly became hostile, creating a situation in which it not possible to predict what the result would be¹. (4)

[Note—¹Here, Kaushalya laments that when the time came for Lord Ram to become a king and Sita a queen, the Fate turned against them all of a sudden.

The Kalpa Tree is the legendary tree of the gods in heaven; it is said to be an evergreen tree. The 'kalapabēli' is the creeper that is wound around this tree and lives in close proximity to it. This creeper needs the support of the tree to survive, for otherwise it would wilt and die.

So, in this metaphor, Lord Ram is the 'Kalpa tree', and Sita is the 'Kalpa creeper'. The fruits and flowers symbolize the colourful images that the mother conjured up in her imaginations regarding Lord Ram and Sita as a couple who would present so fabulous a picture together as a King and Queen; the many auspicious things they would do, the many glories that would come to them, the countless days of joy and happiness that would fly by her as if on wings.]

पलँग पीठ तजि गोद हिंडोरा । सियँ न दीन्ह पगु अवनि कठोरा ॥ ५ ॥
जिअनमूरि जिमि जोगवत रहऊँ । दीप बाति नहिं टारन कहऊँ ॥ ६ ॥

palamṅga pīṭha taji gōda hiṁḍōrā. siyam'na dīnha pagu avani kathōrā. 5.
ji'anamūri jimi jōgavata raha'ūm'. dīpa bāti nahim ṭārana kaha'ūm'. 6.

Sita has never set her delicate feet on hard ground, for she is accustomed to the softness of a padded swing-bed, or a soft seating mat, or sitting on the lap of her mother. (5)

I had been protecting her from all sorts of inconveniences and hardships with the same diligence as one would take care of something on which one's life depends.

Nay, I had not as much as ever asked her to put off the lighted lamp (for the fear that she might burn herself or smear her fingers with the oil). (6)

सोइ सिय चलन चहति बन साथा । आयसु काह होइ रघुनाथा ॥ ७ ॥
चंद किरन रस रसिक चकोरी । रबि रुख नयन सकइ किमि जोरी ॥ ८ ॥

sō'i siya calana cahati bana sāthā. āyasu kāha hō'i raghunāthā. 7.
canda kirana rasa rasika cakōrī. rabi rukha nayana saka'i kimi jōrī. 8.

Verily indeed, it is such an unfortunate paradox of fate that the same Sita now wants to go to the forest in order to accompany you.

Oh the Lord of the Raghus (*raghunāthā*)! Prithee, tell me now what thou hast to say or order to her (Sita) in this situation¹. (7)

Tell me, for I wonder, how the female bird known as Chakori, who is accustomed to looking at the cool disc of the moon and enjoying its pleasant light, will be ever able to stare at the blazing sun, as it would definitely blind her².

[To wit, how will Sita be able to cope with the tremendous hardships of the forest because she is not at all accustomed to such a life? She has lived a life of comfort and ease, well cared and protected, then how will she manage things in the cruel environment of the wilderness, the harsh life in the forest?] (8)

[Note—¹Kaushalya has left little space for Lord Ram to decide on his own what answer to give with respect to the question whether or not he should take Sita along with him to the forest, because the mother has clearly hinted to him that she is against this idea. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 58—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 60.}]

So, the Lord decided that he should try to persuade Sita to stay home, if nothing else than at least for their mother Kaushalya's sake, for the latter's happiness and comfort. This is explicitly clear in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 61 herein below.

²The 'Chakor' is the Indian red-legged partridge. The 'Chakori' is its female counterpart. This bird is so enamoured of the moon that it keeps its gaze fixed on it as soon as the moon rises in the eastern horizon. Then the bird follows the moon's path across the sky till it sets in the western horizon.

This metaphor is employed by poets to show the condition of a true lover, for the lover would think of nothing else but the object of his or her love.

In this present case, this bird called Chakori is cited to mean that Sita would not be able to cope with the harsh realities of a forest life as she is not accustomed to any kind of hardships even as the bird is unable to stand the glare of the sun and would become blind as it is accustomed only to seeing the soft and cool light of the moon.]

दो०. करि केहरि निसिचर चरहिं दुष्ट जंतु बन भूरि।

बिष बाटिकाँ कि सोह सुत सुभग सजीवनि मूरि ॥ ५९ ॥

dōhā.

kari kēhari nisicara carahim duṣṭa jantu bana bhūri.
biṣa bāṭikāṁ ki sōha suta subhaga sajjivani mūri. 59.

The forest is infested with all sorts of wild animals, such as elephants, lions, demons, and many other kinds of cruel and ferocious creatures¹.

Oh son (*suta*)! Say, can a life-giving herb known as Sanjivani ever look fit to be grown in a garden where poisonous plants thrive?

[Definitely not. So therefore, in the wilderness where wild animals roam about freely and ferocious demons and other nocturnal creatures hunt for prey, would it be

proper and fit to keep Sita; would it be advisable that she should accompany you to such a formidable, inhospitable and hostile place?]² (Doha no. 59)

[Note—¹Lord Ram too has asserted about these dangers of the forest in almost similar terms to deter Sita from accompanying him. {Refer specially to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 62—to Chaupai line nos. 1 and 3 that precede Doha no. 63.

²In the previous verse, Kaushalya has asked Lord Ram what has he to say to the prospect of Sita accompanying him to the forest. Before the Lord could answer, the distraught mother has given her opinion on this matter in this doha by saying that it is sure that Sita is not fit for the forest.

This was a cue which Lord Ram quickly picked up, for we shall read presently in the verses that follow herein below that he tries his best to dissuade his wife (Sita) to rethink on the matter and discard her wish to accompany him to the forest, as it would do good to no one.]

चौ०. बन हित कोल किरात किसोरी । रचीं बिरंचि बिषय सुख भोरी ॥ १ ॥

पाहन कृमि जिमि कठिन सुभाऊ । तिन्हहि कलेसु न कानन काऊ ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

bana hita kōla kirāta kisōrī. racīm birañci biṣaya sukha bhōrī. 1.

pāhana kṛmi jimi kaṭhina subhā'ū. tinhahi kalēsu na kānana kā'ū. 2.

Arguing against Sita going to the forest, mother Kaushalya continued*: ‘Verily, the creator Brahma (birañci) has designated women of the forest-dwelling tribes known as the Kols and Kirats to live in the harsh environments of the wilds for they are accustomed to it, and at the same time they have no idea of what physical comforts and pleasures mean as are known to women who live in a more cultured and civil environment of cities and towns¹. (1)

Such women are hardened by Nature just like a worm that lives in holes or crevices in rocks. [Such creatures are accustomed to the roughness and dryness of the rock and the harsh life that it entails for those who wish to live there; so it does not matter to the worm that is born to live such a life. Similarly, women who live in the forest have become accustomed to their lives amidst difficult environs.]’ (2)

[Note—*There is an interesting spin-off of the description of the difficult life in the forest that mother Kaushalya is painting in order to dissuade Sita from insisting on going to the forest. She indirectly warns her son, Lord Ram, of the terrible prospect that faces him too, for he too has had a privileged life till now! So therefore, in case he would like to change his mind, then he can rest assured that his mother (Kaushalya) would be there to support him. She had a greater right to decide the future of Lord Ram and command him to do or not to do anything by the simple reason of her being the mother who gave him birth, as opposed to Kaikeyi who was merely the Lord’s step-mother, i.e. a ‘step’ away from the mother who gave him birth. Kaikeyi happened to be the Lord’s mother just because she was one of the wives of

his father, Dasrath, and so far removed in importance and the hierarchy of respect as compared to Kaushalya who gave birth to the Lord.

Mother Kaushalya has already told Lord Ram that if it is only his father who has ordered him to go to the forest, then he need not do so as a 'mother' has greater importance and occupies a more revered place than a father as far as the son is concerned. It clearly means that since she (Kaushalya) is his mother and she does not approve of his going to the forest, he can stay back without violating any protocol or rule of law. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 56.}

But then, we have already read that Lord Ram explained to her the many reasons why it is important that he must go to the forest, and that she need not worry for his safety. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 57.}

After all, a king is required to go to battles and lead his army from the front if any enemy attacks the kingdom; in this scenario where does the question of avoiding it just because the king has had a privileged life of comfort and pleasures arise?

¹The women folk of the tribes that live in the country-sides, the forests and hills are born to live in the midst of the harsh realities of life of these places. They become accustomed to it; they take it very naturally and in their stride, as they have no idea that there is some other way of life in this world that is different from theirs. They do not know what physical comforts and pleasures mean. To wit, such women are at ease with the realities of harsh life in the wilds, as they have no way to compare it with the more pleasant way of living as lived by those who dwell in civil societies of the cities and towns.

But, if we consider the case of a woman who has had a privileged life, who was born and bred in physical comfort and enjoyed all the pleasures that material things of this world could afford to her, who has never even heard of the difficulties and toils of life lived by the country-folk, the forest and the hills, it would come as a severe shock for such women if they are suddenly made to live a life that is just the opposite to which they have been accustomed to and which is beyond their imagination. In all probabilities, they would fall sick and emotionally unhinged.

This is what the mother is hinting at here. Sita has had a privileged birth and a life of comfort and ease, as she was born a princess in a great kingdom, and married a prince of another great kingdom. She does not know what physical discomfort and sufferings are; what physical labour actually means; what it means to sleep under the sky on a hard ground; how uncomfortable it is to walk on the road for miles and miles on end, under the sun and the rain; how harsh is winter cold, the hot summer, or the rainy season which soaks the skin wet. This being the case, how would she cope with the life in the forest?

Lord Ram had met Kols and Kiraats in the forest; he was welcomed by them, showed great affection and was serviced by them. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 135—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 137.}

The pain and agony in Kaushalya's heart regarding the great sufferings that Lord Ram and Sita would have to endure in the forest was also shared by the country folk, the men and women of villages and hamlets in remote parts who met the Lord while he was on his way to the forest. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 119—to Doha no. 121.}]

कै तापस तिय कानन जोगू । जिन्ह तप हेतु तजा सब भोगू ॥ ३ ॥
सिय बन बसिहि तात केहि भाँती । चित्रलिखित कपि देखि डेराती ॥ ४ ॥

kai tāpasa tiya kānana jōgū. jinha tapa hētu tajā saba bhōgū. 3.
siya bana basihi tāta kēhi bhāmṭī. citralikhita kapi dēkhi dērātī. 4.

[Giving another example of women who are destined to live in the forest, mother Kaushalya says—] ‘Other women who may be suited for life in the forest are the wives of those who have retired there as hermits and sages to do Tapa (austerity, penance) in the forest, for they have decided to sacrifice all physical comforts and pleasures for the sake of Tapa¹. (3)

My dear son (tāta)! Say, how will Sita survive in the forests when she is so sensitive that she gets sore affright at the very sight of a female monkey if she sees her in a painting². (4)

[Note—¹We come across one such stellar example of a hermitress who lived in the hermitage of her hermit-husband: She is ‘Anusuyia’, the wife of sage Atri. Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman had visited them while on their way to the denser parts of the forest. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 3 (Atri); and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 5 (Anusuyia).}

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 134 where we read that sages, hermits and ascetics used to live in the forest where they engaged in doing Tapa and Yagyas (penances, austerities, fire sacrifices etc. respectively).

²It is such an irony of fate that it would make monkeys come to the rescue of Sita when she was abducted by the demon king Ravana, for the army that helped Lord Ram free her from the clutches of the demons consisted entirely of monkeys and bears of Kishkindha, the hills where these creatures had their kingdom. There was not a single member of the human race in it

We read that when she was held captive by Ravana, Hanuman, who had the body of a monkey, was the first to have gone there and meet Sita. Since Sita was so terrified of monkeys, as stated by Kaushalya here, one can imagine how scared she must have been at the first sight of Hanuman when he went to meet her in Lanka. This is hinted at in Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 13.

Even Lord Ram would cite a similar reason of Sita’s sensitive nature in an attempt to dissuade her from going to the forest—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 63 herein below.]

सुरसर सुभग बनज बन चारी । डाबर जोगु कि हंसकुमारी ॥ ५ ॥
अस बिचारि जस आयसु होई । मैं सिख देउँ जानकिहि सोई ॥ ६ ॥

surasara subhaga banaja bana cārī. dābara jōgu ki hansakumārī. 5.
asa bicāri jasa āyasu hōī. maim sikha dē’um’ jānakihi sōī. 6.

The young chick of a swan that lives in the crystal clear water of the heavenly lake (known as the ‘Maansarovar’) and roams around the lotus flowers that grow there, is this privileged bird suited to live in a dirty puddle?¹ (5)

[Addressing Lord Ram, the mother says—] ‘Keeping all this things in mind, think over the matter and tell me what advice I should give Sita.’ (6)

[Note—¹In this metaphor, Sita is likened to the young swan, the privileged life to which she is accustomed to live in to the clean water of the heavenly lake with its lotus flowers, and the rough life in the forest to the muddy puddle where a comfortable existence is difficult.

Mother Kaushalya says that even as the young one of the swan is unfit to live in the dirty puddle, Sita too is unfit to live in the forest.

Lord Ram has also said the same thing to Sita a little while later; refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 63.]

जौं सिय भवन रहै कह अंबा । मोहि कहँ होइ बहुत अवलंबा ॥ ७ ॥
सुनि रघुबीर मातु प्रिय बानी । सील सनेह सुधाँ जनु सानी ॥ ८ ॥

jaum siya bhavana rahai kaha ambā. mōhi kaham̐ hō'i bahuta avalambā. 7.
suni raghubīra mātu priya bānī. sīla sanēha sudhām̐ janu sānī. 8.

Mother Kaushalya says once again: ‘If Sita (agrees to) live at home, it will be a great support and help for me, as I will derive immense succour and solace by her presence.

[To wit, in her I shalt see an image of thee, my dear son, because a faithful wife is said to represent a virtual ‘half’ of her husband. I shalt indeed be contented with her by mine side; and the very thought that it hast proportionately reduced thine sufferings in the forest on account of her, shalt give me some comfort.]’ (7)

Lord Ram quietly heard his mother’s affectionate words (which expressed her deep love for him as well as for Sita), sweet words that were spoken with politeness, and were soaked in love as if they were dipped in nectar. (8)

दो०. कहि प्रिय बचन बिबेकमय कीन्हि मातु परितोष ।
लगे प्रबोधन जानकिहि प्रगटि बिपिन गुन दोष ॥ ६० ॥
dōhā.

kahi priya bacana bibēkamaya kīnhi mātu paritōṣa.
lagē prabōdhana jānakihi pragaṭi bipina guna dōṣa. 60.

Lord Ram comforted his mother by using polite words that spoke of the need of wisdom and principles of righteousness that are to be kept in mind while taking any decision¹.

Then the Lord turned to Sita to speak to her personally, to comfort her as well as to enlighten her of the travails of life in the forest (in an attempt to deter her from insisting to join him in his journey to the wilds)². (Doha no. 60)

[Note—¹Earlier too, the Lord had advised his mother to exercise self-restraint, and not to let emotions overcome her because much was at stake. It was necessary at this juncture to have a broader view of the things, rather than being moved by a short-sighted objective. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 57.}]

Now, he reiterates this advice once again.

²Here Lord Ram wishes to assure his mother Kaushalya that he fully endorses her views regarding Sita not being eligible to go with him to the forest. The Lord points out more horrors of life in the forest, adding newer dimensions to it than what his mother had just a while ago told Sita about.]

[PAUSE 14 FOR A THIRTY-DAY RECITATION]

चौ०. मातु समीप कहत सकुचाहीं । बोले समउ समुझि मन माहीं ॥ १ ॥
 राजकुमारि सिखावनु सुनहू । आन भाँति जियँ जनि कछु गुनहू ॥ २ ॥
 caupāī.

mātu samīpa kahata sakucāhīṁ. bōlē sama'u samujhi mana māhīṁ. 1.
 rājakumāri sikhāvanu sunahū. āna bhāṁti jiyam' jani kachu gunahū. 2.

Lord Ram was initially reluctant to speak to his wife Sita before the mother¹. But it was a delicate situation and there was no time to waste in observing formalities.

So therefore, realizing the emergency of the moment and keeping the demands of time in mind, the Lord decided to speak to Sita personally as follows. (1)

The Lord told Sita: ‘Oh Princess (rājakumāri)²! Listen to my sincere advice, and dost naught misunderstand me³. (2)

[Note—¹According to ancient customs, a husband and a wife of a Hindu household are not supposed to speak to each other in front of their parents and other senior members of the family or society.

But the situation was so sensitive and time was fast running out for Lord Ram that he could not allow formalities to stand in the way of making quick and crucial decisions. Besides this, the mother had already made out her case against Sita going to the forest, but it seemed to have no impact on his wife who seemed determined to follow her husband to the forest. So it became necessary for Lord Ram to intervene personally.

²It is to be remarked here that Lord Ram has addressed his wife as “princess” instead of using a more personal form of address such as “my dear wife” or something of the sort. It is because the Lord wished to maintain etiquette and decorum as prescribed by ancient custom wherein a husband and a wife are not supposed to speak to each other as young couples in the presence of their elders and parents.

³Lord Ram wished to tell Sita that she should not interpret his reluctance to take her with him to the forest as a sign that he wants to abandon her, or that he has decided to leave her behind as he won't ever come back, nor should she think that he is somehow angry at her for some reason. None of these things have any ground or any substance in them. His reluctance in taking her along to the forest is strictly for her own good, convenience and comfort, as well as to help the mother tide over the grief of living without the Lord for fourteen years, and nothing else; she ought naught to read any crooked meaning in his advice to her.]

आपन मोर नीक जौं चहहू । बचनु हमार मानि गृह रहहू ॥ ३ ॥
आयसु मोर सासु सेवकाई । सब बिधि भामिनि भवन भलाई ॥ ४ ॥

āpana mōra nīka jāum̐ cahahū. bacanu hamāra māni gr̥ha rahahū. 3.
āyasu mōra sāsū sēvakā'ī. saba bidhi bhāmini bhavana bhalā'ī. 4.

If thou art interested in thine own welfare as well as that of mine, then please pay attention to my advice and stayest at home. (3)

Oh gracious and honourable lady (bhāmini)! Staying at home wilt serve thee well as it wouldst be in accordance with my own advice to thee, as well as that of thine mother-in-law who too wishest that thou shalt naught proceed to the forest with me (for thou art unfit for the harsh life in the wilds)¹. (4)

[Note—¹We have already read about Kaushalya's wish that Sita should not go to the forest as she is totally unfit for the harsh life there—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 58—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 60.

As for Lord Ram's advice, he too has tried to dissuade Sita from accompanying him as is evident in the verse no. 3 herein above.]

एहि ते अधिक धरमु नहिं दूजा । सादर सासु ससुर पद पूजा ॥ ५ ॥
जब जब मातु करिहि सुधि मोरी । होइहि प्रेम बिकल मति भोरी ॥ ६ ॥
तब तब तुज्ह कहि कथा पुरानी । सुंदरि समुझाएहु मृदु बानी ॥ ७ ॥
कहउँ सुभायँ सपथ सत मोही । सुमुखि मातु हित राखउँ तोही ॥ ८ ॥

ēhi tē adhika dharamu nahim̐ dūjā. sādara sāsū sasura pada pūjā. 5.
jaba jaba mātu karihi sudhi mōrī. hō'ihi prēma bikala mati bhōrī. 6.
taba taba tumha kahi kathā purānī. sundari samujhā'ēhu mṛdu bānī. 7.
kaha'um̐ subhāyam̐ sapatha sata mōhī. sumukhi mātu hita rākha'um̐ tōhī. 8.

For a daughter-in-law, there is no greater meritorious, auspicious and righteous deed than to worship (i.e. serve selflessly at) the feet of her parents-in-law. (5)

Whenever the mother (Kaushalya) remembers me, and becomes overwhelmed with sweet memories of me that wouldst make her miserable and distressed beyond measure in grief and pain, --- (6)

---Then on all such occasions, oh charming lady (sundari), thou wilt comfort her and bringest solace to her by using polite words and speaking sweetly even as thou wouldst tell her stories from the Purans (ancient histories) that wouldst keep her hopes alive and spirits high¹. (7)

Oh lady with a sweet face (sumukhi)²! I sayest on oath, without any deceit or conceit in my mind or heart, that I beseech thee to stay at home just because of the mother's sake (for otherwise I wouldst have taken thee along with me to the forest). (8)

[Note—¹Lord Ram told Sita: “Oh sweet and kind Lady! Whenever my mother feels distressed and heartbroken with grief of separation from me, whenever she weeps and feels disconsolate beyond measure, then thou shalt comfort her by narrating incidences from ancient scriptures that describe events of similar nature as we are experiencing now to stress how those affected were able to tide over their difficulties and obtain victory at the end by showing grit, by having hope, as well as by practicing resilience, patience, fortitude and courage. Such stories would help her to realize that she is not the only one who is subjected to such sufferings by the fiat of fate and dictates of providence, but there were others before her who suffered even worse, but nevertheless emerged victorious and happy when they did not yield but held their ground. Besides this, such narrations would help to divert her mind from her immediate pains and grief, and as all tides rise and ebb, the tide of her grief too would recede after some time. Thou shalt encourage her to see the positive side of things; thou shalt lift her sinking spirits and show her the light of hope at the end of the dark tunnel. This wouldst be a great service that thou shalt be doing to me.”

We shall be reading by-and-by that later on in the forest, Lord Ram would himself comfort Laxman and Sita by narrating stories from the ancient Purans whenever they remembered Ayodhya and the family, making them very sad and disconsolate. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 141.}

²By using such adjectives as sweet, charming, gentle etc. for Sita, Lord Ram wishes to sooth her ruffled nerves and comfort her emotions as she is much agitated and uncertain regarding the bleak future that stares her in the face—because a woman usually calms down when her physical charms and virtues are lauded in public.]

दो०. गुर श्रुति संमत धरम फलु पाइअ बिनहिं कलेस ।
हठ बस सब संकट सहे गालव नहुष नरेस ॥ ६१ ॥

dōhā.

gura śruti sammata dharama phalu pā'i'a binahim kalēsa.
haṭha basa saba saṅkaṭa sahē gālava nahuṣa narēsa. 61.

[Lord Ram continued to encourage Sita to stay home:-] ‘Hark (by staying at home to respect my wishes and to serve thy mother-in-law) thou wouldst be eligible to get the

reward that is obtained by one who follows the directions of a guru (teacher, moral advisor, preceptor) as well as the Vedas (scriptures) (because to obey them is an auspicious and right thing to do), whilst if you are adamant (in your determination to accompany me to the forest), then such stubbornness wouldst bring thee aught naught but misery and pain just like the cases of sage Galav (pronounced as ‘Gaalav’) and king Nahush (who suffered due to their rigid attitude)¹.’ (Doha no. 61)

[Note—¹Galav (pronounced as ‘Gaalav’): In the epic Mahabharat, sage Narad has used sage Galav’s example to advice Duryodhan that one should listen and pay heed to the advice given by one’s well-wisher, that being stubborn and adamant is not a good character and this attitude brings pain and grief in its wake. Galav was subjected to great humiliation for his stubbornness.

His story in brief is this: Sage Galav was the disciple of the legendary sage Vishwamitra. Once upon a time, the God of Dharma assumed the form of sage Vasistha and went to visit sage Vishwamitra to test the latter’s commitment to the principles of Dharma, and asked him for food. While Vishwamitra was engaged in preparing fresh meal for his guest, Vasistha (who actually was the God of Dharma in his disguise) was welcomed by other sages and partook of food offered by them. When Vishwamitra’s food was ready and he asked Vasistha to accept it, the latter told him that he has already had his full meal and his hunger is satisfied, so he does not need it, but ordered Vishwamitra to keep standing there as a sort of punishment for being late in providing the food to him. Vishwamitra obeyed his guest’s orders, and he stood there with the warm and freshly prepared food held in his hand that he had lifted up to his head to show respect to the guest while serving him. All the while, sage Galav kept vigil and served his guru, sage Vishwamitra, diligently.

Vishwamitra was very satisfied by his disciple’s service and loyalty to him; so he told Galav that he is now freed from his obligations to serve his Guru, and could go away. Galav told Vishwamitra that he wishes to give some ‘Dakshina’ (a token tribute paid to one’s guru by his disciple at the time of departure) to him before moving away. Though Vishwamitra told him repeatedly that he needs nothing and that Galav need not worry about the Dakshina, yet his disciple kept on insisting that he would give something. This stubbornness of his disciple, albeit with a good intention and an honest wish to repay the obligations of his guru, angered Vishwamitra, who demanded that since Galav is so desirous of giving him something, then he should bring for his guru 800 horses that are as white as the silvery disc of the moon but have black ears.

This order was so impractical and impossible to fulfill that Galav was stunned; he was left in a quandary and became pale so much so that he decided to end his life. At last, however, he thought of seeking Lord Vishnu’s help, upon which Garud, the legendary mount of the Lord, came to Galav’s help. He took Galav on his back, and the two searched for such horses everywhere in the universe but failed to find them.

Then, Garud took Galav to king Yayaati who was told the entire story and requested for help. The king gave his own daughter named Maadhavi to Galav and told him that his daughter is blessed with the boon that she would produce four independent lines of progenies (i.e. she would have four husbands who would sire four independent families from her), and told Galav that it would ultimately help him fulfill his wishes. Since Galav had taken the vows of celibacy, he and Garud thought of the matter and took Maadhavi to another great king named ‘Haraya-shwa’ of the Ikshwaku race (to which Lord Ram and his father Dasrath too belonged). This king had no son, and was doing Tapa (penances) to have a son. Garud and Galav gave

Maadhavi to him and requested him to accept her, as she would fulfill his wishes for a son. When the king accepted the offer, they told him that their fee for this service to him was 800 white horses with black ears.

The king replied that at present he had only 200 such horses, which they can take as part of their fee, and allow him to produce one son from this lady. Sage Galav accepted the bargain.

Then, Galav went to the king of Kashi (Varanasi), whose name was 'Divodas', and the king of Bhoja, named 'Ushinar', and obtained 200 such horses from each of them respectively by offering this poor and helpless woman in return for the horses.

By now, Galav had collected a total of 600 white horses with black ears. Garud told him that it is not possible to get more such unique horses anywhere on earth, so it will be better for Galav to offer the girl (Maadhavi) to his guru, sage Vishwamitra in exchange (or as a barter) for the remaining 200 horses.

The lesson from this story is that Galav had to undergo so much trouble, was subjected to such immense indignity and humiliation, and had to commit the sin in the process, of going from one king to the door of another king, with a young, innocent and helpless girl in tow by his side, whose dignity, modesty and chastity he had hawked and bartered for such a worldly thing as 'horses' so that he could give his Dakshina to his guru Vishwamitra!

Sage Galav's sufferings and humiliation was caused to him just because of his stubbornness to pay his dues to his guru Vishwamitra in order to show that he is so obedient and righteous towards fulfilling his obligations to his guru, even though the latter had told him he needs nothing.

This story is narrated in detail in the epic Mahabharat, Uddyog Parva, Chapter nos. 106-117.

King Nahush: There is a legendary story how once sage Agastya had converted king Nahush as a serpent. The story goes that once Indra, the king of Gods, was demoted from his exalted stature due to the curse of killing some Brahmins, and king Nahush had taken his place. Nahush lustfully eyed the consort of Indra, named Indrani. To punish him, Brihaspati, the moral preceptor of Gods, devised a stratagem by which Indrani requested Nahush to come to her riding a palanquin that was never used by anyone earlier. Overcome and blinded by passions, Nahush forgot everything about propriety and probity, and he summoned all the great sages and seers of the time to act as carriers or bearers of his palanquin. Humble sages and seers did not mind because Nahush was now elevated to the stature of Indra, the king of Gods. Nahush was so eager to reach heaven as quickly as possible that he kept prodding and scolding these sages to walk faster. Enraged, astonished and peeved at this nonsense being perpetrated by the haughty king, sage Agastya had then cursed him to become a great and poisonous snake. This story appears in Mahabharat, Anushaashan Parva, 99-100.

Lord Ram has used these two instances, one of sage Galav and the other of king Nahush, to stress that stubbornness and an adamant attitude, though apparently without any malefic intentions, more often than not backfires, and is detrimental to one's well-being. Refer also to: Chaupai line no. 3 that follows herein below.}

चौ०. मैं पुनि करि प्रवान पितु बानी । बेगि फिरब सुनु सुमुखि सयानी ॥ १ ॥

दिवस जात नहिं लागिहि बारा । सुंदरि सिखवनु सुनहु हमारा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

maim̐ puni kari pravāna pitu bānī. bēgi phiraba sunu sumukhi sayānī. 1.
divasa jāta nahim̐ lāgihi bārā. sundari sikhavanu sunahu hamārā. 2.

[Lord Ram told Sita—] ‘Please listen to me, oh thy sweet-faced and wise lady (sumukhi sayānī)*! I wouldst fulfill my father’s words (that he hast given to Kaikeyi, that I ought to live in the woods for fourteen years) and waste no time to come back hither immediately. (1)

Oh fair and charming lady (sundari)*, please pay heed to my sincere advice to thee, for days wilt fly away almost un-noticed (and soon rather than later thee wouldst have the pleasure to be reunited with me; so bear with me for some time, and gather courage). (2)

[Note--*These and other such pleasant adjectives that are used by Lord Ram to address Sita are not meant to describe her physical charm or beauty, for the occasion is not for such matters. It was a usual practice to address a young woman with pleasant sounding words.

Further, these pleasing words were also used by Lord Ram to tell Sita that he has great love for her, and she should not construe them to mean that he is abandoning her, and that she should not find some crooked meaning to his asking her to stay back and not accompany him to the forest.]

जौं हठ करहु प्रेम बस बामा । तौ तुम्ह दुखु पाउब परिनामा ॥ ३ ॥

काननु कठिन भयंकरु भारी । घोर घामु हिम बारि बयारी ॥ ४ ॥

jauṁ haṭha karahu prēma basa bāmā. tau tumha dukhu pā'uba parināmā. 3.
kānanu kaṭhina bhayaṅkaru bhārī. ghōra ghāmu hima bāri bayārī. 4.

If thou remain adamant (in your desire to accompany me to the forest) out of thy love for me, if thine affection for me so much influences thee as to make thee stubborn enough to defy my advice and insist in accompanying me, then prithee, mark it, that thou shalt get aught naught but sorrows, misery, pain and grief in return¹. (3)

The wilderness is a terrible place to abide in; it is very harsh, exceptionally difficult. There is, on the one hand, severe heat (during the hot summer months), snow and frost (during winters), rain, hail and wind (during the rainy season)². (4)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 61 herein above.

Lord Ram’s prophesy was indeed proved true—because Sita was abducted by the demon king Ravana and held captive by him in his capital city of Lanka, where she had to endure great suffering, misery, grief and pain. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Aranya Kand, (i) Doha no. 28; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 23-26 that precede Doha no. 29; (b) Sundar Kand, (iii) Doha no. 8 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it;

(iv) Chaupai line nos. 1-12 that precede Doha no. 12; (v) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 31—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 32.}

²After Sita remained unmoved and kept silent to indicate that she is determined to follow her husband, Lord Ram, to the forest in spite of what he and his mother Kaushalya had said to her in their futile attempt to dissuade her from doing so, when Lord Ram perceived that polite ways of persuasion by pointing out her duty to obey her husband and mother-in-law has failed to make her change her mind, the Lord decided to adopt a more aggressive strategy by pointing out to Sita the countless horrors of the forest and travails of harsh life there, one by one, to see if it scares her into submission to his wish to stay at home.

In this context, refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 59 earlier.]

कुस कंटक मग काँकर नाना । चलब पयादेहिं बिनु पदत्राना ॥ ५ ॥

चरन कमल मृदु मंजु तुम्हारे । मारग अगम भूमिधर भारे ॥ ६ ॥

kusa kaṇṭaka maga kām̐kara nānā. calaba payādēhiṁ binu padatrānā. 5.
carana kamala mṛdu maṅju tumhārē. māraga agama bhūmidhara bhārē. 6.

The path is full of sharp twigs, thorns and stones that bite the feet when one walks barefoot on the ground. [Beware, if thou art determined to go with me, thy shalt have to walk barefoot, and sharp objects on the path wouldst cause pain and wound in thine feet. Don't blame me later on that I hadn't warned thee.]¹ (5)

Thy lotus-like feet are soft and delicate, and the path to the forest is very harsh and formidable, for there are huge rocky mountains and hills along the way that have to be traversed too². (6)

[Note—¹We find a similar verse in Adhyatma Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, Canto 4, verse no. 67.

²Refer also to: Valmiki's Ramayana, Ayodhya Kand, Canto 28, verse no. 9.]

कंदर खोह नदीं नद नारे । अगम अगाध न जाहिं निहारे ॥ ७ ॥

भालु बाघ बृक केहरि नागा । करहिं नाद सुनि धीरजु भागा ॥ ८ ॥

kandara khōha nadīm̐ nada nārē. agama agādha na jāhiṁ nihārē. 7.
bhālu bāgha bṛka kēhari nāgā. karahiṁ nāda suni dhīraju bhāgā. 8.

Then there are deep valleys, ridges, caves, rivers and streams—verily indeed, all of them are so formidable and scary that there mere sight wouldst terrify the wits out of even seasoned souls. (7)

Not only that, there are wild beasts such bears, tigers, wolves, lions, serpents (roaming in the forest)¹—who make such terrifying sounds in the wilderness that even ‘Courage’ would abandon its patience and resilience to feel scared.

[To wit, I tell thee honestly, I wot naught how wilt thou cope with all this.] (8)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 59—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 60.]

दो०. भूमि सयन बलकल बसन असनु कंद फल मूल ।
ते कि सदा सब दिन मिलहिं सबुड़ समय अनुकूल ॥ ६२ ॥

dōhā.

bhūmi sayana balakala basana asanu kanda phala mūla.
tē ki sadā saba dina milahim sabu'i samaya anukūla. 62.

‘The hard and rough ground wilt be thy bed where thou wouldst be expected to sleep; thine clothes wouldst consist of leaves and bark of trees; thy food wouldst be edible roots, fruits and stems (and naught the delectable viands and such other dainties thy art habituated to for partaking at home)¹.

But unfortunately, there is no certainty that they too wouldst be available regularly every day, for their availability depends much on the season, the time and the place.’ (Doha no. 62)

[Note—¹In this context, refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 89 (eating fruits and edible roots); (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 90—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 91 (sleeping on the ground); (iii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 105 (resting under a tree); (iv) Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 112 (walking barefoot, harsh path, traversing hills and mountains, encountering lions and other wild beasts); (v) Doha no. 113 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it (rivers, lakes, trees, hard ground, clouds, mountains, woods, wild animals, et al that Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman saw on the way to the forest; (vi) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 119—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 120 (attire, food, walking barefoot, sleeping on the ground and general life in the forest, as well as the path through it); and (vii) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 123 (the Lord’s passage through the forest).]

चौ०. नर अहार रजनीचर चरहीं । कपट बेष बिधि कोटिक करहीं ॥ १ ॥
लागइ अति पहार कर पानी । बिपिन बिपति नहिं जाइ बखानी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

nara ahāra rajanīcara carahīm. kapaṭa bēṣa bidhi kōṭika karahīm. 1.
lāga'i ati pahāra kara pānī. bipina bipati nahim jā'i bakhānī. 2.

Demons, who are nocturnal creatures and feed on human flesh, roam around unchecked in the wilds; they are very deceitful and assume all sorts of forms to deceive and terrorise their victims¹. (1)

The water of the hills (e.g. waterfalls, springs, lakes, ponds) and its surrounding areas are hard to drink and hurt when touched².

Verily indeed, to be brief, the travails, the miseries and the hardships that are so characteristic of life in the harsh environs of wilderness of the forest are so horrible and immense in their numbers and intensity that they cannot be sufficiently described or enumerated in words. (2)

[Note—¹Earlier, mother Kaushalya too has warned Sita that she would encounter ferocious demons and cruel creatures in the forest, and wondered how she would cope with their sight when she gets terrified even by mere sight of a monkey in a picture—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 59; (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 60.

²After outlining the unavailability of ordinary cooked food in the forest, and the compulsion to survive on raw fruits, roots and stems as narrated in Doha no. 62 herein above, Lord Ram now warns Sita of the difficulties of obtaining sweet and clean drinking water. More often than not the water that is available in the forest is unclean and unfit for drinking, for water in small ponds and small lakes are stagnant and dirty. Wild animals bathe and wade in watering holes in the forest, making them filthy and unsuitable for human consumption.

Around the hilly areas the water may be hard-water due to the surrounding rocks; it may taste bitter and metallic. Then, often times it is so cold that it bites the fingers when touched during winters.

Warning Sita of this problem in the forest, where even drinking water is difficult to come by easily, he tells her that she must be warned that she faces the horrible prospect of finding it difficult to obtain even a good source of potable water in the wilderness. She must remember that she would be constantly on the move, and so even if she gets clean drinkable water somewhere, there is no certainty of it elsewhere.]

ब्याल कराल बिहग बन घोरा । निसिचर निकर नारि नर चोरा ॥ ३ ॥

डरपहिं धीर गहन सुधि आएँ । मृगलोचनि तुम्ह भीरु सुभाएँ ॥ ४ ॥

byāla karāla bihaga bana ghōrā. nīsicara nikara nāri nara cōrā. 3.

ḍarapahim dhīra gahana sudhi ā'ēm̐. mṛgalōcani tumha bhīru subhā'ēm̐. 4.

The forest is infested with very dangerous serpents and frightening birds of prey, as well as huge hordes of demons who would steal men and women for their food¹. (3)

Even the thought of life in a forest wouldst scare those who are otherwise courageous, brave, and robust in mind and strong at heart, but thee, oh lady with doe-like eyes (i.e. who has beautiful eyes—“mṛgalōcani”), art of a delicate frame, and a timid and sensitive nature². [Say then, I can't comprehend and wot naught how thee wouldst be able to cope with the terrifying, harsh and rude life of the wilderness?]

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 59, and (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 62 earlier, and (iii) presently Chaupai line no. 1 herein above.

²Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 60 where we read that mother Kaushalya too has expressed this reservation.]

हंसगवनि तुह नहिं बन जोगू । सुनि अपजसु मोहि देइहि लोगू ॥ ५ ॥
मानस सलिल सुधाँ प्रतिपाली । जिअइ कि लवन पयोधि मराली ॥ ६ ॥

hansagavani tumha nahim bana jōgū. suni apajasu mōhi dē'ihī lōgū. 5.
mānasa salila sudhām̐ pratipālī. jī'a'i ki lavana payōdhi marālī. 6.

Oh gracious lady who is as graceful as a female swan (hansagavani)! Verily indeed and without gainsay, thy art definitely not suited for the forest. The people wilt blame me when they hear that I havest taken thee along, and it wouldst surely bring immense infamy to me. (5)

Truly, a female swan born and bred in the crystal clean and nectarine water of the lake known as 'Manas'¹ shalt surely not survive in the harshness of the saline water of the ocean which is very corrosive. (6)

[Note—¹The Manas lake refers to the lake known as the 'maansarovar' located at the foothills of Mt. Kailash in the northern upper reaches of the Himalayas. This lake is pristine clean and has very sweet water. It is believed that a lot many swans float on its surface.

In this context, refer also to a similar thing said by mother Kaushalya in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 60 herein above.]

नव रसाल बन बिहरनसीला । सोह कि कोकिल बिपिन करीला ॥ ७ ॥
रहहु भवन अस हृदयँ बिचारी । चंदबदनि दुखु कानन भारी ॥ ८ ॥

nava rasāla bana biharanasīlā. sōha ki kōkila bipina karīlā. 7.
rahahu bhavana asa hṛdayam̐ bicārī. candabadani dukhu kānana bhārī. 8.

Canst a cuckoo who adorns a mango grove with abundance of fruits (that are fresh and sweet) ever look suitable to dwell in a thicket full of thorny plants called Karila (i.e. the caper plant) that are dry and without leaves?¹ (7)

[Concluding his exhortation to Sita to stay at home, Lord Ram said—] 'Taking all these things into consideration and paying attention to what hast been advised to thee for thine own good and welfare, it is prudent and wise for thee to stay home.

Oh fair lady who resembles the full moon (candabadani)! Remember—the forest has uncountable woes and immense miseries that are formidable and difficult to cope with.² (8)

[Note—¹Lord Ram means that Sita was born and bred as a princess, was accustomed to material comforts, and an easy and privileged life. How does it make any sense that she be plucked from her natural habitat and suddenly transferred to the harsh environment of the forest?

In this metaphor, Sita is the ‘cuckoo’, the ‘mango grove’ is the life of comfort in the royal palace, while the ‘thicket of thorny plants’ is the harsh and inhospitable environs of the wild forest.

²Lord Ram has given a similar advice to Laxman a little while later in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 71.]

दो०. सहज सुहृद गुर स्वामि सिख जो न करइ सिर मानि ।
सो पछिताइ अघाइ उर अवसि होइ हित हानि ॥ ६३ ॥

dōhā.

sahaja suhrda gura svāmi sikha jō na kara'i sira māni.
sō pachitā'i aghā'i ura avasi hō'i hita hāni. 63.

[While summing up his advice to Sita to pay heed to what he is advising her, as it is in her own interest, Lord Ram once again warned her of the grave consequences that would follow if she still defied him and remains adamant to accompany him to the wilderness.]

Lord Ram said to Sita: ‘Verily, those who do not pay attention to the advice given to them by their well-wishers, their guru (teacher, advisor, spiritual preceptor) and their Lord (i.e. their Master, their seniors, their superiors), and who do not obey their command with reverence by bowing their heads— surely then such unfortunate people are bound to gravely repent for their defiance, they are bound to undergo immense sufferings and uncountable woes till their hearts are full of regret and remorse, and it is also sure that their interests would suffer irrevocably. [So therefore, beware, oh gentle lady, about what thou wouldst decide to do.]¹ (Doha no. 63)

[Note—¹Lord Ram has given a similar advice to Laxman a little while later in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 70.]

चौ०. सुनि मृदु बचन मनोहर पिय के । लोचन ललित भरे जल सिय के ॥ १ ॥
सीतल सिख दाहक भइ कैसैं । चकइहि सरद चंद निसि जैसैं ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sunī mṛḍu bacana manōhara piya kē. lōcana lalita bharē jala siya kē. 1.
sītala sikha dāhaka bha'i kaisēm. caka'ihī sarada canda nisi jaisēm. 2.

When Sita had patiently heard what her dear husband (Lord Ram) had to say to her, tears welled up in her eyes¹. (1)

Lord Ram's advice to her, that was otherwise spoken politely and was meant for her good, nevertheless caused immense heartburn inside Sita just like the case of a full winter's moon that produces intense suffering in the heart of a female bird called Chakvi². (2)

[Note—¹Sita faced a huge dilemma. On the one hand her husband was advising her and insisting that she stay at home, and there was the fear of defying his orders, and on the other hand there was the intense and unbearable grief of separation from the Lord that stared in her face and would certainly choke her to death if she agrees with him.

Besides these two equally precarious options, there was another more serious concern for her: at the time of marriage she had taken a vow (i.e. the 'marriage-vow') that she would be by her husband's side in thick and thin, that she would share his joys and pain equally, that nothing would ever separate her from the Lord. If she stays at home and allows Lord Ram to go alone to the forest, then she would be held guilty of breaking a vow that should be sacrosanct for a wife.

So therefore, she was overwhelmed with two guilts now: one was of disobedience to her husband and mother-in-law if she insists in going to the forest, and the other was of breaking her marriage vows if she agrees to stay at home.

Further, the prospect of a life separated from her husband was equally horrible and terrifying as was the life in the forest.

So, Sita became disconsolate and began to weep.

²The female Chakvi (the ruddy goose), who is separated from her partner, suffers intense pain of separation when her passions are ignited in the light of the full moon during a winter night. To wit, though the moonlight is soothing and cool otherwise, but it nevertheless seems to burn the heart of the Chakvi who laments and wails in the memory of her beloved male Chakva who has flown away from her.

In this verse, this metaphor implies that the very prospect of separation from her beloved husband, Lord Ram, caused immense grief and heartburn to Sita, though what the Lord had told her was said in a very polite way, and was meant for her own welfare.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 78 herein below.]

उतरु न आव बिकल बैदेही । तजन चहत सुचि स्वामि सनेही ॥ ३ ॥

बरबस रोकि बिलोचन बारी । धरि धीरजु उर अवनिकुमारी ॥ ४ ॥

utaru na āva bikala baidēhī. tajana cahata suci svāmi sanēhī. 3.
barabasa rōki bilōcana bārī. dhari dhīraju ura avanikumārī. 4.

Vaidehi (Sita, the daughter of king Videha of Janakpur) was so dumbfounded that she did not know what to say as an answer. She was stunned by the thought that her Lord was thinking of abandoning her¹. (3)

However, Sita, the daughter of mother earth (avanikumārī)², somehow managed to hold her tears back, and gathered enough courage to hold herself from breaking down emotionally. (4)

[Note—¹Anybody would see that it is natural for Sita to interpret Lord Ram's advice as a sign that the Lord wants to leave or abandon her. She was naturally very upset as it was unexpected by her; she was shocked that Lord Ram could even think of living without her.

²Sita was found by her father, king Janak, in an earthen pitcher while he was cleaning and preparing the ground for a grand fire sacrifice. He picked up the infant and brought her up as his own daughter. This event is narrated in Veda Vyas' epic 'Adhyatma Ramayan', Baal Kand, Canto 6, verse nos. 59-60.]

लागि सासु पग कह कर जोरी । छमबि देबि बड़ि अबिनय मोरी ॥ ५ ॥
 दीन्हि प्रानपति मोहि सिख सोई । जेहि बिधि मोर परम हित होई ॥ ६ ॥
 मैं पुनि समुझि दीखि मन माहीं । पिय बियोग सम दुखु जग नाहीं ॥ ७ ॥

lāgi sāsū paga kaha kara jōrī. chamabi dēbi baḍi abinaya mōrī. 5.
 dīnhi prānapati mōhi sikha sō'ī. jēhi bidhi mōra parama hita hō'ī. 6.
 mair̥m puni samujhi dīkhi mana māhīm. piya biyōga sama dukhu jaga nāhīm.
 7.

Sita caught hold of her mother-in-law's feet to show her respect to the latter and said in a very polite and submissive voice: 'Oh venerable and goddess-like mother (dēbi)! Please excuse me for my impertinence that I chose to speak before you (but the situation is so delicate and grave that I had no choice but to speak what I feel is necessary to say). (5)

Indeed it is true that my dear husband, who is the very Lord of my life (prānapati), has given me an advice that is good for me in every way and would ensure that my best interests are taken care of. (6)

But nevertheless, I have weighed the pros and the cons in my mind and have come to the conclusion that there is no worse sorrow, misery, grief and pain than the one caused by separation from one's dear husband.' (7)

दो०. प्राननाथ करुनायतन सुंदर सुखद सुजान ।
 तुम्ह बिनु रघुकुल कुमुद बिधु सुरपुर नरक समान ॥ ६४ ॥
 dōhā.

prānanātha karunāyatana sundara sukhada sujāna.
 tumha binu raghukula kumuda bidhu surapura naraka samāna. 64.

[After addressing her mother-in-law, Kaushalya, Sita turned to Lord Ram and said—]

'Oh the Lord of my life (prānanātha), oh Lord who is a fount of mercy and compassion (karunāyatana), oh Lord who grants comfort to others (sukhada), who

possesses all the beautiful virtues that exist (sundara), and who is a thorough gentleman and very wise (sujāna)!

Verily I say that without you, oh the Lord who gives joy to the illustrious family of king Raghu even as the moon grants joy to the lily flower and makes it bloom (raghukula kumuda bidhu), even the abode of the gods in heaven is equivalent to life in hell for me.' (Doha no. 64)

[Note—Sita has given a clear hint in these verses that she is not ready to live a life separated from Lord Ram.]

चौ०. मातु पिता भगिनी प्रिय भाई । प्रिय परिवारु सुहृद समुदाई ॥ १ ॥
 सासु ससुर गुरु सजन सहाई । सुत सुंदर सुसील सुखदाई ॥ २ ॥
 जहँ लगि नाथ नेह अरु नाते । पिय बिनु तियहि तरनिहु ते ताते ॥ ३ ॥
 caupāī.

mātu pitā bhaginī priya bhāī. priya parivāru suhr̥da samudāī. 1.
 sāsū sasura gura sajana sahāī. suta sundara susīla sukhadāī. 2.
 jaham̐ lagi nātha nēha aru nātē. piya binu tiyahi taranihu tē tātē. 3.

[Sita continued to address Lord Ram and tells him that though whatever he has said and advised her is true, but for a wife her husband is superior to everything else and every relationship in this world. He occupies a primary place in the world of a wife, and all the rest are secondary to her. So now, she will argue her own case and present it so logically and reasonably unassailable before the Lord that ultimately she succeeded in persuading him to take her along with him to the forest, irrespective of the consequences and all other considerations—]

Sita said to Lord Ram: 'Oh Lord! Whatsoever relations that exist in this world, such as of a mother and a father, a dear sister and a brother, an affectionate family and its members, all those who are well-wishers, --- (1)

--- A mother-in-law and a father-in-law, the guru (teacher, spiritual guide and advisor), the elderly people and those who are seniors, those who are respectable and friendly, and a son who is charming, who has good character and gives happiness to his mother, --- (2)

--- Verily indeed I affirm that these and all other relationships that constitute a woman's world and would deem to make her happy and contented in life, none of them can be equal to or even compare with the importance that her husband has for her in life, because without her husband none of these relationships give her peace and happiness, but, on the contrary, they would be the cause of immense grief, misery and suffering for her that is far worse than the tormenting heat of a scorching sun. (3)

तनु धनु धामु धरनि पुर राजू । पति बिहीन सबु सोक समाजू ॥ ४ ॥
 भोग रोगसम भूषन भारू । जम जातना सरिस संसारू ॥ ५ ॥

प्राननाथ तुम्ह बिनु जग माहीं । मो कहूँ सुखद कतहुँ कछु नाहीं ॥ ६ ॥

tanu dhanu dhāmu dharani pura rājū. pati bihīna sabu sōka samājū. 4.
bhōga rōgasama bhūṣana bhārū. jama jātanā sarisa sansārū. 5.
prānanātha tumha binu jaga māhīm. mō kahum̐ sukhada katahum̐ kachu
nāhīm. 6.

Forsooth and without gainsay, for a woman everything, including her body, wealth, home, land and authority over a domain—are nothing but a combination of sorrows, grief and miseries in the absence of her husband. (4)

Without her husband, all the physical pleasures and material comforts are equivalent to different diseases that would make a person restless and feel tormented; all her ornaments become burdensome for her as if they were a load on her body.

Life in the world becomes an unending suffering in hell for her. (5)

Oh Lord of my life (who is as dear to me as my own being— “prānanātha”)! Without you, nothing in this world, anywhere and in any era of time, will ever give me any kind of happiness and comfort. (6)

[Note—Sita essentially tells her husband, Lord Ram, that her life is centered around him and him alone, and that everything else is secondary and peripheral as far as she is concerned.

We shall read later on in our narration that Anusuiya, the wife of sage Atri, too has said that for a married woman no one and no thing is more important for her in this world than her husband, and by being loyal to him and serving him faithfully she becomes eligible to attain salvation and beatitude—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 5-a along with Chaupai line nos. 10, 18-19 that precede it.]

जिय बिनु देह नदी बिनु बारी । तैसिअ नाथ पुरुष बिनु नारी ॥ ७ ॥

नाथ सकल सुख साथ तुम्हारे । सरद बिमल बिधु बदन नु निहारे ॥ ८ ॥

jiya binu dēha nadī binu bārī. taisi'a nātha puruṣa binu nārī. 7.
nātha sakala sukha sātha tumhārēm. sarada bimala bidhu badanu nihārēm. 8.

Even as a body is worthless without there being life in it, and a river is of no value if there is no water in it, so is a woman worthless and useless sans her husband. (7)

Therefore, oh Lord (nātha), every happiness and comfort will be deemed to be mine and come to me naturally when I accompany you even as I feel contented and glad by beholding your charming countenance resembling the full moon of an autumn night.¹
(8)

[Note—¹The full moon during a night in autumn looks beautiful and charming, and it is very soothing for the senses. So, Sita here says that the joy she would derive by looking at her husband by her side would be so profound that it would neutralize any sort of discomfort or unease she may be feeling in the forest. The happiness and joy

that she would get in the company of her husband would far outweigh and neutralize any kind of suffering that the harsh life in the forest might be causing her.]

दो०. खग मृग परिजन नगरु बनु बलकल बिमल दुकूल ।

नाथ साथ सुरसदन सम परनसाल सुख मूल ॥ ६५ ॥

dōhā.

khaga mṛga parijana nagaru banu balakala bimala dukūla.
nātha sātha surasadana sama paranasāla sukha mūla. 65.

[Now, Sita favourably compares life in the forest with her present life at home.]

Sita continued—‘Oh Lord (nātha)! With you by my side, the animals and birds of the forest would be like my family members¹; the forest would be the same as the city (of Ayodhya)², the leaves and bark of trees that I would be wrapping around my body would be equivalent to the pleasant clothes that I wear here at home; and the thatched hut where I shall abide in the forest would be as comfortable and pleasant as the gilded palace where gods live (in the heaven).³ (Doha no. 65)

[Note—¹This addresses Lord Ram’s concerns for Sita regarding wild animals and other creatures that roam in the forest as narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 62 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it, and Chaupai line nos. 1 and 3 that follow it.

²Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precede Doha no. 84 where we read that the grieving citizens of Ayodhya too decide to accompany Lord Ram at the time the Lord left the city to go to the forest, saying amongst themselves that “the forest where Lord Ram would live is as good as Ayodhya for us, so all of us would accompany our beloved Lord to wherever he goes”.

Verily indeed, the forest and all its constituents felt blessed and privileged with Lord Ram in their midst; the otherwise harsh and inhospitable realm of the forest became objects of envy for gods. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precedes Doha no. 136; (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 137—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 139.}

³Sita was very happy and lived a contented life with Lord Ram in the forest as is clearly narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 140 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it.]

चौ०. बनदेबीं बनदेव उदारा । करिहिहिं सासु ससुर सम सारा ॥ १ ॥

कुस किसलय साथरी सुहाई । प्रभु सँग मंजु मनोज तुराई ॥ २ ॥

कंद मूल फल अमिअ अहारू । अवध सौध सत सरिस पहारू ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

banadēbīrṁ banadēva udārā. karihahīrṁ sāsū sasura sama sārā. 1.
kusa kisalaya sātharī suhāī. prabhu samṅga manṅju manōja turāī. 2.
kanda mūla phala ami'a ahārū. avadha saudha sata sarisa pahārū. 3.

[In the verses that follow herein below, Sita would answer every objection raised by her Lord Ram in his attempt to dissuade her from accompanying him to the forest.]

Sita continued: ‘The beneficent and benevolent female and male deities of the forest would take care of me like they were my own mother-in-law and father-in-law respectively¹. (1)

The soft twigs and leaves of trees that would be spread on the ground would resemble a soft bed for me to recline upon.

Nay, not only this, but with the Lord (i.e. Lord Ram) by my side this bed would be as attractive and pleasing as if it was a bed meant for Kaamdeo (i.e. cupid; the god of love and beauty)². (2)

Food consisting of edible roots, stems and fruits would be as delectable and sweet a viand for me as if they were all different forms of nectar³.

And the hills and mountains in the forest would be equivalent in giving comfort to me as if they were palaces of Ayodhya⁴. (3)

[Note—¹We have already read a little while earlier that Kaushalya, the mother of Lord Ram, has also blessed her son that these deities of the forest would take care of him as if they were his parents—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 56.

So therefore, they would naturally be like Sita’s mother and father in-laws.

²This addresses Lord Ram’s concerns for Sita as narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 62 along with Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes it.

³This addresses the Lord’s reservations about availability of proper food in the forest as expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 62.

⁴This addresses the problem of rough terrain consisting of rough road, rocks, hills and mountains that Sita would encounter in the forest: apropos—Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 62.]

छिनु छिनु प्रभु पद कमल बिलोकी । रहिहउँ मुदित दिवस जिमि कोकी ॥ ४ ॥
बन दुख नाथ कहे बहुतेरे । भय बिषाद परिताप घनेरे ॥ ५ ॥
प्रभु बियोग लवलेस समाना । सब मिलि होहिं न कृपानिधाना ॥ ६ ॥

chinu chinu prabhu pada kamala bilōkī. rahiha'umṁ mudita divasa jimi kōkī. 4.
bana dukha nātha kahē bahutērē. bhaya biṣāda paritāpa ghanērē. 5.
prabhu biyōga lavalēsa samānā. saba mili hōhīrṁ na krpānidhānā. 6.

Seeing your feet every now and then (i.e. feeling assured that you are with me at all times) I shall feel exceedingly glad and happy just like the Chakvi (the female ruddy goose) feels during the day time¹. (4)

The Lord has enumerated the different sufferings and horrors of the forest, as well as the many difficulties, the so many travails and the various miseries of life in it (in order to dissuade me from insisting in going to the forest)². (5)

But oh Lord who is an ocean of mercy, compassion and kindness (*krpānidhānā*), I unequivocally affirm that all of them taken together are no match and are miniscule in comparison to the grief, pain, misery and torment that I would have to undergo if separated from you.

[To wit, oh merciful Lord, the pang of the sharp and piercing pain of separation from thee that I wouldst be subjected to shalt be unbearable for me, for I say most truthfully and with utmost sincerity in mine command that this pain and grief of separation from thee wouldst surpass all other pains and miseries that thou hast listed herein before, and which thou sayest I shalt encounter in the wilds if I accompany thee.] (6)

[Note—¹This legendary female bird, the Chakvi, lives happily with its partner, the male Chakva, during the day time; however, as night approaches the couple separate. So, therefore, Sita cites this example to say that she will be very happy with her partner, Lord Ram, by her side at all times just like the Chakvi remains happy and contented during the day with the Chakva by her side.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 62—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 63.]

अस जियँ जानि सुजान सिरोमनि । लेइअ संग मोहि छाड़िअ जनि ॥ ७ ॥
बिनती बहुत करौँ का स्वामी । करुनामय उर अंतरजामी ॥ ८ ॥

asa jiyam̐ jāni sujāna sirōmani. lē'i'a saṅga mōhi chāḍia jani. 7.
binatī bahuta karaur̐ kā svāmī. karunāmaya ura antarajāmī. 8.

Taking cognizance of all these submissions of mine, oh Lord who is most wise and intelligent and who fully understands the view point of the other person (*sujāna sirōmani*), I hope that you would take me along to the forest, and would not leave me behind you. (7)

Oh Lord (*svāmī*), what more can I submit in the form of a prayer, for you are an embodiment of compassion, mercy and kindness (*karunāmaya*), and at the same time you know the inner thoughts of my heart (as nothing is concealed from you, because you live inside the subtle heart of everyone, and not only of me—“*ura antarajāmī*”).

[To wit, oh merciful and all-knowing Lord, I wot naught what more to say to thee. Since, oh Lord, my heart is thine abode, and also since thy art all-knowing and omniscient, I cannot deceive thee by pretensions and false talk. So therefore, thy must be aware of the truth of whatever that I have said to thee, for I can't cheat thee in the first place, and why shalt I do so in the second place?]' (8)

दो०. राखिअ अवध जो अवधि लागि रहत न जनिअहिं प्रान ।
दीनबंधु सुंदर सुखद सील सनेह निधान ॥ ६६ ॥

dōhā.

rākhi'a avadha jō avadhi lagi rahata na jani'ahim prāna.
dīnabandhu sundara sukhada sīla sanēha nidhāna. 66.

Sita told Lord Ram: 'If you insist in keeping me back in Ayodhya for the period (of fourteen years) while you will be away (in the forest), then oh Lord who is a friend of the distressed (dīnabandhu), who has a beautiful character (sundara), who grants happiness to all (sukhada), who is an embodiment of grace and courtesy (sīla -- nidhāna), and who is a treasure of love and affection (sanēha nidhāna)—you must be certain that I will not live (during this period).¹ (Doha no. 66)

[Note—¹Sita has enumerated these glorious virtues of Lord Ram to remind him that all these famous characters of the Lord would be undermined and he would not be able to answer if someone questions him why he acted in a way that was contrary to what these virtues define and stand for. Why did he abandon his wife and leave her lamenting and wailing miserably if he was so merciful and compassionate, a friend of those in distress, and an embodiment of grace, love and affection towards all? The Lord would have no answer if he abandons her and leaves her behind while going to the forest, especially when she was willing and ready to endure all hardships with joy, and says that she would die if the Lord abandons her.

The Lord would have no answer if he fails in his obligations that come under the definition of the virtues enumerated herein above, and that is sure to happen if he abandons her, if he leaves her wailing and lamenting, if he does not come to her rescue, if he becomes stone-hearted insomuch as not to show any trace of compassion and mercy to a helpless lady asking for succour and solace in times of her distress.

Sita says that if the Lord wishes to honour his good name and the virtues that are so characteristic of him, for it is because of these glorious virtues that the Lord is so highly respected and praised in this world, then he must come forward to help her by accepting her prayers to accompany him to the forest.]

चौ०. मोहि मग चलत न होइहि हारी । छिनु छिनु चरन सरोज निहारी ॥ १ ॥
सबहि भाँति पिय सेवा करिहौं । मारग जनित सकल श्रम हरिहौं ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

mōhi maga calata na hō'ihi hārī. chinu chinu carana sarōja nihārī. 1.
sabahi bhāmṭi piya sēvā karihaum̐. mārāga janita sakala śrama harihaum̐. 2.

[Sita assured Lord Ram that she will be fine in the forest with him, and he need not worry about her discomfort as she would have none.]

Sita said to Lord Ram: ‘Oh Lord! Walking alongside you and having the privilege every moment of seeing your feet moving steadily ahead on the path of the forest, I (assure you that I) will not feel tired or weary in the least¹. (1)

My dear Lord (piya), I will actively and diligently serve you in every possible way, and I would endeavour to provide relief to you to help you overcome your tiredness, and I would relieve you of the toil of a long and arduous journey on foot (through the rough terrain of the wilds)². (2)

[Note—¹Sita said: “Oh Lord, when I shalt observe how thee wouldst be moving ahead briskly on the path in the forest, it wouldst inspire me and encourage me to follow thine example and move ahead with the same enthusiasm and vigour to keep step with thee. Do not have any reservations as to that, for thee wouldst never find me lagging behind.”

And in fact this indeed was true, for we shall read by-and-by that Sita and Laxman kept pace with Lord Ram as he moved away steadily on the path of the forest—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 123.

²Sita said: “Oh Lord, whenever thou shalt feel tired, I wilst massage thine feet, wilst press it gently, I wilst wash it with water and wrap it with whatever thing wouldst be available to make thy feet warm and comfortable. Should any thorn prick thee, or should some sharp rock or pebble cause a cut in thine feet, then I wilst take care of the wound and nurse thy feet till thou art fit for the onward journey.”

Sita was not a lazy lady who would shun physical labour or effort, but very active and diligent in doing her routine household duties even while she lived a privileged life in the palace surrounded by many maids and servants. She used to participate personally in taking care of the routine household chores of the palace that required physical activity, and would prefer to do everything herself rather than rely on an army of servants. She would not just sit idly and give orders to her servants and maids, but would personally get involved in doing the chores. Sita would personally serve her husband Lord Ram as well as her mothers-in-law although there was no dearth of servitors in the royal palace. In this context, refer to Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-7 that precede Doha no. 24.]

पाय पखारि बैठि तरु छाहीं । करिहउँ बाउ मुदित मन माहीं ॥ ३ ॥

श्रम कन सहित स्याम तनु देखें । कहँ दुख समउ प्रानपति पेखें ॥ ४ ॥

pāya pakhāri baiṭhi taru chāhīm. kariha'um̐ bā'u mudita mana māhīm. 3.
śrama kana sahita syāma tanu dēkhēm. kahaṁ̐ dukha sama'u prānapati pēkhēm. 4.

I shall wash your feet and sit down under the shade of a tree to give you rest, and I shall fan you with a cheerful heart to make you feel relaxed. (3)

I shall derive immense happiness and solace by seeing my beloved Lord's body which has a dark complexion, and on which sweat drops would glisten to make it more charming.

Say then, when will I have the time to reflect upon my own difficulties and afflictions, or brood over my miseries and troubles (in case I have any, that is)¹? (4)

[Note—¹Said Sita: “Oh Lord, thou havest warned me of the countless troubles and problems I shalt be encountering in the forest, and which wouldst make me miserable and distressed, but tell me where wouldst there be time for me to even think of such things, as all mine time shalt be engaged in serving thee, in taking care that thou art comfortable and happy? Say, where wilt I find the time to waste on brooding and reflecting upon my imaginary misfortunes, even if they existed in a world of dreams?”]

सम महि तृन तरुपल्लव डासी । पाय पलोटिहि सब निसि दासी ॥ ५ ॥
बार बार मृदु मूरति जोही । लागिहि तात बयारि न मोही ॥ ६ ॥

sama mahi ṭṛṇa tarupallava dāsī. pāya palōṭiḥi saba nisi dāsī. 5.
bāra bāra mṛdu mūrati jōhī. lāgiḥi tāta bayāri na mōhī. 6.

I will find an even ground to lay a bed of twigs and leaves for you to recline upon, and then this humble servant of yours shall press and massage your feet the whole night (to relieve them of the tiredness and the toil of the journey)¹. (5)

When I shall have the privilege of repeatedly seeing your sweet face and charming form, it would be so soothing an experience for me that I shall then not feel the heat of the hot air (of the summers) that would blow over me (in its attempt to make me feel uneasy and scorched)². (6)

[Note—¹Sita said: “Oh Lord, thee wouldst be so tired by the end of the day that thy wouldst be needing rest. So then at that time, I shalt search for an even ground under the shade of a tree, spread soft leaves and twigs on it to make a bed for thee, and while thou wouldst recline on it, I shalt massage thine feet and fan thee so that thy weariness of the journey goes away, and thou couldst sleep comfortably, to wake up refreshed the next morning for the onward journey of the day.”]

²“And as far as the hot summer days are concerned, with hot wind blowing across the land that would virtually seem to roast one alive, it is only an imaginary fear, for the heat of the summer and its hot air wouldst have no affect on me as it wouldst be countered by the soothing effect thine charming view shall havest on me, and I shalt derive immense comfort under thine benevolent protection and affectionate glances that wouldst in no way be less comforting and soothing than the cool shadow of a large tree that shades the weary traveller from the dreadful heat whilst he is on the way to his destination.”]

को प्रभु सँग मोहि चितवनिहारा । सिंघबधुहि जिमि ससक सिआरा ॥ ७ ॥
मैं सुकुमारि नाथ बन जोगू । तुम्हहि उचित तप मो कहूँ भोगू ॥ ८ ॥

kō prabhu samṅa mōhi citavanihārā. siṅhabadhuhi jimi sasaka si'ārā. 7.
mairiṁ sukumāri nātha bana jōgū. tumhahi ucita tapa mō kahum' bhōgū. 8.

And as for my protection and safety (from ferocious demons and other wild creatures in the forest), well, who would dare to raise his eyes at me with a vile intention whilst the Lord (i.e. Lord Ram) is by my side, just like the case of a hare or a jackal who would not dare to cast an evil eye on a lioness¹? (7)

So therefore, by all accounts and under all circumstances, I am fit and eligible for the forest (irrespective of all its troubles and miseries that you have enumerated to me a while ago).

How incongruous, completely out of place, odd and outrageous it would be if one believes that Tapa (a life of penance, austerity and hardship) is fit for you, while a life of Bhoga (enjoyment of pleasures and comforts of material world) is fit for me!², (8)

[Note—¹In this analogy, Sita is the lioness, while the wild creatures and demons who prey on travellers in the forest path are like the hare or the jackal who do not have the guts to even think of attacking a lioness because they know very well that it is impossible for them to harm her.

This is Sita's reply to one of Lord Ram's objections in taking her to the forest, which was that it is infested with wild beasts and ferocious demons who feed on humans; the demons would even abduct men and women for this purpose. So therefore, Sita was not fit to go to such a dangerous place. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1, 3-5 that precede Doha no. 63.}

Sita said confidently: "Oh Lord, why shouldst I be worried about mine safety and security in the wilds; what fear dost I have from wild creatures and ferocious demons there? With thee by my side and with thine protective shield around me, who canst dare cast an evil eye upon me? Say, canst a hare or a jackal ever dare to touch a hair of a lioness, or even comest near her? So then, why doth thou worry about mine safety and security? Nothing doing; nay, I wilst naught be swayed by such petty things as they don't bother me at all."

²Sita essentially says that as a wife she must share everything in her husband's life, and this sharing is not limited just to the good things of life, but it also entails sharing the bad things in equal measure. A wife is said to be one-half of her husband, implying that she must share a half of everything that fate brings to her husband. So therefore, if her husband is ordered by the fiat of fate, the dictates of destiny, and the provisions of providence to do Tapa, then she is also expected to do the same by default.]

दो०. ऐसेउ बचन कठोर सुनि जौं न हृदउ बिलगान ।
तौ प्रभु बिषम बियोग दुख सहिहहिं पावँर प्रान ॥ ६७ ॥
dōhā.

aisē'u bacana kaṭhōra suni jauriṁ na hr̥da'u bilagāna.
tau prabhu biṣama biyōga dukha sahihahiṁ pāvam̐ra prāna. 67.

[Sita wound up her arguments in the case before the jury consisting of her husband, Lord Ram, and her mother-in-law, Kaushalya, with this concluding remark—]

Sita told Lord Ram: ‘Oh Lord! Even after hearing such stern and heart-wrenching words (of yours)¹ my heart does not burst with grief and life not abandons me, then it seems I may survive the pang of grief that would hit me hard upon being separated from you.’ (Doha no. 67)

[Note—¹Sita says that if she was made to live in Ayodhya while being subjected to the pain of separation from Lord Ram, it will be because her soul was sinful and would have to undergo punishment, for otherwise she would die.

Sita refers to Lord Ram’s advice to her to stay home and not to accompany him to the forest, because if she does not pay heed to him then she shall regret—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 63 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it.

Earlier too we have read that this advice of Lord Ram had caused immense grief and consternation to Sita, for she felt exceedingly tormented at the prospect of her husband abandoning her—this is evident in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 64.

In the present Doha, she merely reiterates her position; she says that if such stern words of Lord Ram—that he virtually orders her to stay at home—are not harsh enough to have stabbed her heart so violently that they killed her, and if she is stone-hearted herself as to have borne with this violent strike, then surely there are fair chances that she would survive the pain of actual separation from the Lord.

This statement of Sita is said in sarcasm, with a lot of distress, disgust and bitterness in her agitated heart. She implies that, after all, she can’t defy Lord Ram beyond a point; if the Lord would still insist that she ought to stay home and not accompany him to the forest inspite of her strong plea against this advice of the Lord, then she would have no option but to comply with it. But let it be clear to the Lord as well as her mother-in-law that this situation—where she would be compelled to leave her husband and stay at home—would be totally against her own wish, and though she would be forced to comply, but her heart would literally burst with grief. She may survive, but her life would be like a wounded person whose heart had suffered a deep injury of a stab.]

चौ०. अस कहि सीय बिकल भइ भारी । बचन बियोगु न सकी सँभारी ॥ १ ॥

देखि दसा रघुपति जियँ जाना । हठि राखें नहिं राखिहि प्राणा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

asa kahi sīya bikala bha'i bhārī. bacana biyōgu na sakī sam̐bhārī. 1.

dēkhi dasā raghupati jiyam̐ jānā. haṭhi rākhēm nahim̐ rākhihi prānā. 2.

After putting her plea strongly and convincingly before Lord Ram, and praying to him most earnestly to let her accompany him to the forest, Sita became exceedingly agitated and distressed. The very thought and the very words that had any hint of her separation from Lord Ram were unbearable for her, and she just could not cope with the grief that it caused to her, as a consequence of which she was left speechless. (1)

When Lord Ram, the Lord of the Raghus (raghupati), observed her precarious and distraught condition, he was sure that she would not survive if he insists any further that she should stay at home¹. (2)

[Note—¹The conversation between Sita and Lord Ram, the poignancy of the situation, the pitiable condition of Sita that led Lord Ram to be convinced of her complete devotion for him, and that she won't survive without him under any circumstance, compelled him to give his consent to her to come with him to the forest. This episode has been narrated wonderfully in another of Tulsidas' classic called 'Geetawali Ramayan', in its Ayodhya Kand, verse nos. 5-9.]

कहेउ कृपाल भानुकुलनाथा । परिहरि सोचु चलहु बन साथ ॥ ३ ॥
नहिं बिषाद कर अवसरु आजू । बेगि करहु बन गवन समाजू ॥ ४ ॥

kahē'u kṛpāla bhānukulanāthā. parihari sōcu calahu bana sāthā. 3.
nahim biṣāda kara avasaru ājū. bēgi karahu bana gavana samājū. 4.

[Realising that Sita is determined to accompany him to the forest, and that she won't survive if he forcefully leaves her behind at home, Lord Ram gave her his consent to accompany him to the forest.]

The merciful and gracious Lord of the Solar Race, i.e. Lord Ram, told Sita: 'Well, if this is thine wish, then so be it. Come then, leave aside all sorts of lamentations and grief, and accompany me to the forest. (3)

This is not the proper time to wail and engage in unnecessary lamentations; so make haste and prepare thy self for proceeding to the forest forthwith¹. (4)

[Note—¹Lord Ram heard Sita patiently and bethought to himself: "I am convinced of Sita's devotion and loyalty to me; I am also moved by her pitiful condition and her sincere desire to accompany me, and I am sure that if I force her to stay back she will die. It's truly heartwarming for me to realize that she is cheerfully willing to cope with all the miseries, pain and troubles of the harsh life in the forest, and cares not for them as long as I am with her. Further, instead of worrying about her own discomfort and inconveniences she is more concerned about my comfort and service that she would render to me in the forest. When I weigh all the pros and the cons I conclude that I will be doing great injustice to her by leaving her at home, and at the same time it would cast a dark shadow on my own reputation of being most merciful, compassionate and kind Lord who goes all out to afford solace and succour to his devotees. Say, what answer would I have when the world asks me where were my commitments of putting the interests of my true devotee and sincere follower at the top, even if that meant troubles for my own self? No, no; I can't let my devotee suffer the agony of separation from me. I must take Sita along with me wherever I go."

So, Lord Ram told Sita to stop all further grieving and weeping as any more of it would not only waste time but also give a wrong signal to others, who were not aware of what transpired between them within the private walls of the palace, for they might think that Sita was weeping and lamenting because she did not like the idea of going to the forest, but her husband was cajoling her to accompany him. Hence, she had to agree to accompany him under pressure, and not out of her own free will.

Remember: Till this day, Sita had never stepped out of the precincts of the royal palace on foot, unguarded, and like an ordinary woman walking with her husband. In those rare cases when she did move out of the palace gates, it was done with full royal protocol in place, as was routinely observed whenever any member of the royal household went out of the palace. For instance, she would ride on a chariot or in a palanquin with a retinue of attendants and guards who would form a protective ring around her. But this time it would be totally different—now she would be heading to the forest on foot, walking alongside her husband, Lord Ram, attired as a wife of a hermit, because the Lord himself would have to don clothes befitting a hermit when he proceeds to live in the forest as demanded by Kaikeyi. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 29.}

Hence, as soon as she stepped out of the palace, everyone would be closely observing her. In this situation, it would be highly improper if she showed any sign of grief, misery or worry on her face. She should, instead, bear a smile and a happy countenance so that all those who watch her feel that she is very happy to go to the forest with Lord Ram. This would give her a good name and bring laurels to her.

Another reason is that one should proceed on a long journey gladly and cheerfully, with joy and happiness in one's heart, and not after weeping and lamenting before departure, or with a grave face and heavy legs as if one was unwilling to proceed further, as this is deemed to an inauspicious start of any journey and a bad omen.

Refer also to Tulsidas' Book "Geetawali Ramayan", Ayodhya Kand, verse no. 9 where we read what Lord Ram has told Sita while agreeing to take her along with him to the forest.]

कहि प्रिय बचन प्रिया समुझाई । लगे मातु पद आसिष पाई ॥ ५ ॥
बेगि प्रजा दुख मेटब आई । जननी निठुर बिसरि जनि जाई ॥ ६ ॥

kahi priya bacana priyā samujhā'ī. lagē mātu pada āsiṣa pā'ī. 5.
bēgi prajā dukha mēṭaba ā'ī. janānī niṭhura bisari jani jā'ī. 6.

After Lord Ram had thus advised his dear wife (Sita) to immediately prepare for the journey to the forest, he touched the feet of his mother (Kaushalya) and received her final blessings. (5)

While bidding Lord Ram her final farewell, mother Kaushalya said (with a very heavy heart that was on the verge of bursting, but which she somehow managed to keep under control): 'Come back soon (my dear son), so that the misery, grief and sorrows of your subjects (i.e. the citizens of Ayodhya) can ultimately be dispelled. And, meanwhile, do not forget your mother who seems to be so stern and emotionless (that she allows you willingly to go to the forest while agreeing to stay at home)¹. (6)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 56—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 57.]

फिरिहि दसा बिधि बहुरि कि मोरी । देखिहउँ नयन मनोहर जोरी ॥ ७ ॥

सुदिन सुघरी तात कब होइहि । जननी जिअत बदन बिधु जोइहि ॥ ८ ॥

phirihī dasā bidhi bahurī ki mōrī. dēkhiha'um' nayana manōhara jōrī. 7.
sudina sugharī tāta kaba hō'ihī. janānī ji'ata badana bidhu jō'ihī. 8.

Gravely lamenting and grieving, mother Kaushalya prays to the Creator, wondering: 'Oh Creator (bidhi)! Will the malignant tide of time of my misfortunes one day turn around to become good and benign for me? Will I be fortunate enough that one day I would once again see this beautiful sight of the divine couple (i.e. Lord Ram and Sita) with my eyes?' (7)

She then turned to Lord Ram and prayed: 'Oh my dear son (tāta)! Prithēe tell me, when will that auspicious day and time come in her life when thy mother wouldst be able to see thine pretty face that resembles a full moon?'¹ (8)

[Note—¹A similar narration is found in Tulsidas' "Geetawali Ramayan", Lanka Kand, verse nos. 17-20. Here we read how Kaushalya was eagerly awaiting Lord Ram's return from the forest.

Kaushalya wonders: "Will I live long enough to see my beloved son, Lord Ram, and my beloved daughter-in-law, Sita, once again in mine life? Oh Creator! How cruel hast thou been on me; what harm hadst I done to thee that thou wouldst punish me so harshly? Oh the Regulator of Destiny! Doth thou wot naught that it is not me alone but all the citizens of Ayodhya too who art made to suffer so immensely for no fault of theirs? Why, prithēe say, why art we made to bear such extreme distress and agony just because thou art ruthless in carrying out thine whims and fancies in a merciless and heartless manner?"

दो०. बहुरि बच्छ कहि लालु कहि रघुपति रघुबर तात ।
कबहिं बोलाइ लगाइ हियँ हरषि निरखिहउँ गात ॥ ६८ ॥
dōhā.

bahurī baccha kahi lālu kahi raghupati raghubara tāta.
kabahim bōlā'i lagā'i hiyam' haraṣi nirakhiha'um' gāta. 68.

Kaushalya expresses her intense sense of distress and grief while bidding Lord Ram goodbye when she says: 'Say, oh my dear son, will I ever get a chance again in my life to be able to once again shower my love and affection on you by calling you 'my dear child', 'my dear son'; or by addressing you as 'Raghupati' to summon you hither, to affectionately caress you and clasp you to my bosom, and to feel exhilarated and happy when I would see your pretty face often once again in life? [Tell me, will that fortunate day come in my life again? Son, I just don't know what to say to thee and what to do; I am dumbfounded and heartbroken beyond belief. Verily indeed, I am nothing but a living corpse now onwards.]' (Doha no. 68)

चौ०. लखि सनेह कातरि महतारी । बचनु न आव बिकल भइ भारी ॥ १ ॥

राम प्रबोधु कीन्ह बिधि नाना । समउ सनेहु न जाइ बखाना ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

lakhi sanēha kātari mahatārī. bacanu na āva bikala bha'i bhārī. 1.
rāma prabōdhu kīnha bidhi nānā. sama'u sanēhu na jā'i bakhānā. 2.

The distraught and helpless mother was so overwhelmed with excess of grief and stabs of intense sharp pain that sheared through her heart, occasioned by her forced separation from her beloved son, Lord Ram, whom she loved dearly, that she was completely choked with emotions that made it impossible for her to speak a word any more¹. (1)

When Lord Ram observed this pitiful condition of his mother, he too was moved. He tried to console and give comfort to her in a variety of ways². The pain, grief, sadness and lamentations of the mother on the one hand, and, on the other hand, overflowing love and devotion of the mother for her son and vice versa, that prevailed during those poignant moments of separation of Kaushalya from Lord Ram were so intense, so profound and so deep that they cannot be sufficiently described in words. (2)

[Note—¹Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 57 along with the note appended thereto.]

²Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 57 along with the note appended thereto.]

तब जानकी सासु पग लागी । सुनिअ माय मैं परम अभागी ॥ ३ ॥

सेवा समय दैअँ बनू दीन्हा । मोर मनोरथु सफल न कीन्हा ॥ ४ ॥

taba jānakī sāsu paga lāgī. suni'a māya mairṁ parama abhāgī. 3.
sēvā samaya dai'am'banu dīnhā. mōra manōrathu saphala na kīnhā. 4.

[After Lord Ram took his final leave of his mother with a heavy heart, now it was the turn of Sita to bid her farewell. Oh Lord—one can well imagine what a horrifying experience of utmost pain, grief and sadness the distraught and disconsolate Kaushalya might have gone through on that occasion. That she did not die of grief, and her heart did not burst with pain, was because she had tremendous resilience and fortitude in her which enabled her to gather courage to override this great misfortune, and to let the dark clouds pass over till the time that one day the sun would once again shine brilliantly, and its sunshine would radiate warmth and comfort for all in Ayodhya. Mother Kaushalya has already said so in Doha no. 68 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it herein above.]

Then, Sita fell at the feet of Kaushalya and submitted: 'Oh my respected mother-in-law! I am very unfortunate indeed.

[Why is Sita unfortunate? This is answered herein below.] (3)

When it was time for me to serve thee, the malignant fate decreed a forest exile for me instead, which effectively (shut the door on me and) prevented me from fulfilling my wishes (of serving thee). (4)

तजब छोभु जनि छाड़िअ छोहू । करमु कठिन कछु दोसु न मोहू ॥ ५ ॥
सुनि सिय बचन सासु अकुलानी । दसा कवनि बिधि कहौं बखानी ॥ ६ ॥

tajaba chōbhū jani chāḍia chōhū. karamu kaṭhina kachu dōsu na mōhū. 5.
suni siya bacana sāsū akulānī. dasā kavani bidhi kahāuṁ bakhānī. 6.

So mother, whilst I beseech thee naught to be perturbed too much by this development, and to abandon grieving and feeling miserable on this account, but at the same time I also pray that thee shouldst naught abandon thine love and affection for me on any account whatsoever.

One's commitment to duties and fulfillment of responsibilities is so sacrosanct and inviolable that it becomes obligatory for one to honour them first and foremost. The fiat of Fate, the decree of Destiny, and the provisions of Providence are so inescapable that one hast to bow before them¹.

Keeping this maxim in view, it is also not mine fault that I could naught serve thee as I wouldst have otherwise wanted to do (because the same Fate, the same Destiny and the same Providence assigned the forest to me, thereby effectively preventing me from serving thee at home).² (5)

Hearing these sad words of Sita, the mother-in-law became very agitated and distressed. Her condition was so distraught and pitiable that it is not possible to describe it in words². (6)

[Note—¹This view, that many events in life are beyond the control of an individual, and a creature's life is governed by many factors that are not apparent to him, is reiterated elsewhere in Ram Charit Manas also—apropos: Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 282.

²To describe any given situation one would need the help of 'words', and words consist of alphabets that have their own limited field of play. Hence, words have a limited jurisdiction and a limited scope to express profundity of emotions and sentiments completely and in a comprehensive way. This idea is reiterated elsewhere in Ram Charit Manas too—apropos: Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 241. The occasion here is a meeting between Lord Ram and Bharat that was marked with great love and affection betwixt the two brothers. They had become so overwhelmed with surging emotions of deep love for each other that even a skilled poet would have failed to find words to describe it.]

बारहिं बार लाइ उर लीन्ही । धरि धीरजु सिख आसिष दीन्ही ॥ ७ ॥
अचल होउ अहिवातु तुम्हारा । जब लगि गंग जमुन जल धारा ॥ ८ ॥

bārahiṃ bāra lā'i ura līnhī. dhari dhīraju sikha āsiṣa dīnhī. 7.
acala hō'u ahivātu tumhārā. jaba lagi gaṅga jamuna jala dhārā. 8.

Kaushalya embraced Sita repeatedly; she clasped Sita to her own bosom again and again. The mother-in-law eventually gathered enough courage, patience and fortitude that she blessed Sita and wished her good luck. (7)

Kaushalya said: 'May your married life be steady and everlasting; may your husband have an eternal life for so long as there is water in the holy rivers Ganges and Yamuna.¹' (8)

[Note—¹For a married woman, the best blessing that she can have is to never see the unfortunate day of her widowhood.

By blessing Sita to have an eternally happy married life, which also implied that her husband would have an everlasting life, Kaushalya also blessed Lord Ram by default, because the Lord was Sita's husband.

In this context of Sita being blessed with a long and happy married life without the fear of ever facing widowhood, we can refer to the following verses of Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand also: (i) Doha no. 117; and (ii) Doha no. 246.]

दो०. सीतहि सासु असीस सिख दीन्हि अनेक प्रकार ।
चली नाइ पद पदुम सिरु अति हित बारहिं बार ॥ ६९ ॥

dōhā.

sītahi sāsū asīsa sikha dīnhi anēka prakāra.
calī nā'i pada paduma siru ati hita bārahiṃ bāra. 69.

The mother-in-law (Kaushalya) thus blessed Sita in a variety of ways, and also gave her many good advices that would stand her in good stead in life¹.

Then, Sita repeatedly bowed her head at the lotus-like feet of her mother-in-law before taking final leave and departing from there. (Doha no. 69)

[Note—¹Kaushalya basically advised Sita to adhere to her 'Dharma', i.e. to be very diligent in carrying out her duties towards her husband, Lord Ram.

Among the many things, Kaushalya also told her that she ought to honour all that she had said just a while ago regarding her willingness to serve Lord Ram in the forest and take care of his comforts—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-6 that precede Doha no. 67.

The mother-in-law told Sita that with Lord Ram by her side, she need not worry about anything as she has herself said this with confidence—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 67.

Sita should also treat the deities of the forest and creatures who live there as her family, which she has herself acknowledged would be so—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 65 along with Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it.

She also should not complain of anything, and should share with her husband whatever fate brings to them, including food, place to rest, etc.—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 66.]

चौ०. समाचार जब लछिमन पाए । व्याकुल बिलख बदन उठि धाए ॥ १ ॥
कंप पुलक तन नयन सनीरा । गहे चरन अति प्रेम अधीरा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

samācāra jaba lachimana pā'ē. byākula bilakha badana uṭhi dhā'ē. 1.
kampa pulaka tana nayana sanīrā. gahē carana ati prēma adhīrā. 2.

No sooner did Laxman hear the news, but he was rattled with distress and perplexity. He immediately got up in great agitation and rushed to Lord Ram. (1)

He was trembling and his body was thrilled even as tears gushed out of his eyes. When he reached Lord Ram, he fell at the Lord's feet and clasped it. Laxman was so overwhelmed with a surge of emotions of affection for Lord Ram that he became very impatient and agitated¹. (2)

[Note—¹We have already read that a similar situation prevailed with Sita when she came to learn that Lord Ram has been ordered to go to the forest for fourteen years—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 57.

It ought to be remarked here that Laxman has got to know about the developments a wee whit late; he learnt about Lord Ram and Sita proceeding to the forest only after it became certain to everyone that they would definitely go.

How do we conclude this? Well, the royal attendants waited patiently outside Kaushalya's palace to see what the outcome of Lord Ram's and Sita's visit to Kaushalya would be. But when they saw that both Lord Ram and Sita came out together, and from the couple's general demeanours it became clear to them that both Lord Ram and Sita have decided to proceed to the forest, they rushed to inform Laxman.

This also implies that in all probability, Laxman had met Lord Ram just outside the private chambers of Kaushalya, within the walls of the palace.]

कहि न सकत कछु चितवत ठाढ़े । मीनु दीन जनु जल तें काढ़े ॥ ३ ॥
सोचु हृदयँ बिधि का होनिहारा । सबु सुखु सुकृतु सिरान हमारा ॥ ४ ॥

kahi na sakata kachu citavata ṭhāṛhē. mīnu dīna janu jala tēṁ kāṛhē. 3.
sōcu hṛdayam̐ bidhi kā hōnihārā. sabu sukhu sukṛtu sirāna hamārā. 4.

Laxman was so dumbfounded and shocked that he just stood gazing at the Lord without uttering a word, even as a fish feels pitiable and uncertain about what is in store for it when it is pulled out of the water¹. (3)

Utterly confounded and worried in his heart, Laxman wondered: 'Oh Creator who determines destiny (bidhi)! What is going to happen now²? Why, have all our good fortunes and merits reduced to a naught that we are subjected to such a preposterous and disastrous situation as is witnessed now? (4)

[Note—¹The fish would look at the person standing before it with pitiful eyes that say a silent prayer to let it live. Similar was the condition of Laxman; he did not speak a word, but his expression and eyes conveyed the message of his heart to Lord Ram—which was an earnest prayer to the Lord to have mercy on him and let him live by allowing him to accompany the Lord, for otherwise, just like the fish that is pulled out of the water would die in agony of separation from water, Laxman too would die an agonized death in grief of separation from his beloved Lord.

²Laxman was confounded and uncertain whether or not Lord Ram would allow him to accompany him to the forest. The metaphor of the fish fits in very well here—for the fish is also uncertain of its future, i.e. whether or not it would be allowed to survive by being restored to the water without which it simply cannot live.

The turmoil in Laxman's mind is narrated in the verses that follow herein below.]

मो कहूँ काह कहब रघुनाथा । रखिहहिं भवन कि लेहहिं साथ ॥ ५ ॥
राम बिलोकि बंधु कर जोरें । देह गेह सब सन तृनु तोरें ॥ ६ ॥

mō kahum' kāha kahaba raghunāthā. rakhihahim bhavana ki lēhahim sāthā. 5.
rāma bilōki bandhu kara jōrēm. dēha gēha saba sana tṛnu tōrēm. 6.

‘What shall Lord Ram tell me’, wondered Laxman. ‘Will the Lord order me to stay at home, or will he take me along with him (to the forest)’ (5)

Lord Ram closely observed Laxman (standing before him) with the palms of his hands touching each other in a prayerful mode. Laxman's manners clearly indicated to the Lord that he has broken off all his ties with everything pertaining to this gross material world, i.e. he is neither bothered about the comfort of his body nor is he concerned with the charms of home, just like one would break a useless piece of twig and throw it away¹. (6)

[Note—¹In this context, refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 198.

This verse explicitly says that from the very beginning, Laxman was devoted to Lord Ram and had undiluted affection for the feet of the Lord, for he had decided that ‘Ram’ was his only ‘Lord’, and his best good and welfare lay in serving Lord Ram.

Lord Ram had reciprocated this affection of Laxman for him, and the service the latter rendered to the Lord, later on in the story when Laxman lay wounded in the battle-field of Lanka, and the Lord had wailed and lamented gravely for him. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-17 that precede Doha no. 61.}

बोले बचनु राम नय नागर । सील सनेह सरल सुख सागर ॥ ७ ॥
तात प्रेम बस जनि कदराहू । समुझि हृदयँ परिनाम उछाहू ॥ ८ ॥

bōlē bacanu rāma naya nāgara. sila sanēha sarala sukha sāgara. 7.
tāta prēma basa jani kadarāhū. samujhi hṛdayam^ṁ parināma uchāhū. 8.

Lord Ram— who was an expert in the laws of probity and propriety, who was a personified form of the glorious virtues of grace, courteousness, love, affection and simplicity, as well as an ocean that grants bliss and happiness— spoke thus to Laxman: --- (7)

‘My dear (tāta)! Keeping in mind and realizing in your heart that everything will be alright and fine at the end, let not emotions of love and affection (for me) make you unduly perturbed.

[To wit, my dear brother, havest patience, havest courage, showest fortitude and maturity in this testing hour. What appears so gloomy and dark now wouldst pass away one day, and the sun wilt shine brilliantly once again. Remember my dear, every night ends in a day, all time is not the same, what is dark today shalt be bright tomorrow. So, I prithee, thou ought to exercise courage and patience, and bearest with me with resilience and fortitude for sometime.]’ (8)

दो०. मातु पिता गुरु स्वामि सिख सिर धरि करहिं सुभायँ ।
लहेउ लाभु तिन्ह जनम कर नतरु जनमु जग जायँ ॥ ७० ॥

dōhā.

mātu pitā guru svāmi sikha sira dhari karahim subhāyam^ṁ.
lahē'u lābhu tinha janama kara nataru janamu jaga jāyam^ṁ. 70.

Lord Ram advised Laxman: ‘Those who have a nature of obeying the instructions of their father, mother, guru (teacher; spiritual advisor) and lord by accepting them reverentially and unequivocally, such persons become eligible for acquiring great merit in this world, and their life would be deemed to be honourable. Otherwise, their lives are not worthy of any praise and honour¹.’ (Doha no. 70)

[Note—¹Lord Ram has given a similar advice to Sita too in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 63.]

चौ०. अस जियँ जानि सुनहु सिख भाई । करहु मातु पितु पद सेवकाई ॥ १ ॥
भवन भरतु रिपुसूदनु नाही । राउ बृद्ध मम दुखु मन माहीं ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

asa jiyam^ṁ jāni sunahu sikha bhāī. karahu mātu pitu pada sēvakāī. 1.
bhavana bharatu ripusūdanu nāhīm. rā'u bṛd'dha mama dukhu mana māhīm. 2.

Lord Ram continued: ‘My dear brother, realizing in your heart the truth of what I have told you, pay heed to my advice and serve the feet of the mother and the father¹. (1)

[Now, Lord Ram outlines the main reasons why he wants Laxman to stay at home.] See, both Bharat and Shatrughan (who were Lord Ram's other two brothers) are not at home, and the king (i.e. Dasrath, the Lord's father) is old and overwhelmed with grief of separation from me (which effectively makes him unable to look after the affairs of the kingdom)². (2)

[Note—¹A similar advice was given by Lord Ram to Sita in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-5 that precede Doha no. 61.

Serving “the feet of one's parent” is a way of saying that one should serve one's parents diligently and faithfully.

²Lord Ram told Laxman: “My dearest brother, please understand the gravity of the situation. If we both go out to the forest, there would be no one left to take care of anything here. Our other two brothers are away, and our father is already old. Further, he is crippled by the grief of separation from me. It will create a great void. It is an alarming situation, please realize: the crown will fall vacant; there would be utter chaos everywhere; there would be no one to take charge; the enemies of our kingdom may exploit this precarious situation and attack us. Therefore, it is totally unwise and imprudent for me as well as you to neglect this scenario, and be driven by emotions to act silly. There will be no chance for recompense and regret for us later on should some horror unfold in Ayodhya. So dear, it is wise for thee to stay at home and take charge.”

The next set of verses are explicit on this point.]

में बन जाउँ तुम्हहि लेइ साथ । होइ सबहि बिधि अवध अनाथा ॥ ३ ॥
गुरु पितु मातु प्रजा परिवारू । सब कहूँ परइ दुसह दुख भारू ॥ ४ ॥

mair̥m bana jā'um̃ tumhahi lē'i sāthā. hō'i sabahi bidhi avadha anāthā. 3.
guru pitu mātu prajā parivārū. saba kahū̃ para'i dusaha dukha bhārū. 4.

If I take you with me to the forest, then Ayodhya will be rendered completely desolate, with no one at its helm to take care of it¹. (3)

A horrible calamity would befall on everybody here, be they our guru, our parents, our subjects and our family, and everyone would suffer immensely². (4)

[Note—¹Lord Ram has already given the reason for it in verse no. 2 herein above.

²And this indeed was what happened when Lord Ram left Ayodhya, as has been described in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 83—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 84; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 86.]

रहहु करहु सब कर परितोषू । नतरु तात होइहि बड़ दोषू ॥ ५ ॥
जासु राज प्रिय प्रजा दुखारी । सो नृपु अवसि नरक अधिकारी ॥ ६ ॥

rahahu karahu saba kara paritōṣū. nataru tāta hō'ihī barā dōṣū. 5.
jāsu rāja priya prajā dukhārī. sō nṛpu avasi naraka adhikārī. 6.

So therefore, stay at home and comfort everybody and take care of them. Otherwise, oh brother, it will be a great mistake, because --- (5)

--- A king in whose kingdom his subjects suffer, verily, that king is surely fit for suffering in hell¹. (6)

[Note—¹Lord Ram told Laxman: “My dear brother! Thou shouldst stay at home and stand up to thine responsibilities. A great test awaits thee; pass it with flying colours. If thou stayest at home and take care of everyone here, if thou givest them comfort and solace in mine absence, thou wouldst be worthy of laurels. If thou insist in coming with me, the city would be virtually orphaned. See, our father is already crippled with grief, and so is the chief queen, mother Kaushalya. Our brothers are also away. In brief, a grave calamity would befall on the whole population of Ayodhya. It will be a very dishonourable thing for us to let it happen, for it is an established dictum that a king in whose rule the people suffer is bound to go to hell to suffer himself. So, if the people of Ayodhya are made to suffer because of us, then it will have a negative consequence for me too.

A very remarkable point is to be noted here: Lord Ram has clearly given a hint that for all practical purposes ‘he is, and will be, a king of Ayodhya’. Otherwise, where was the question of his having any kind of dishonour and fearing hell for failing to take care of his subjects when he is already renouncing the crown and leaving the kingdom for the forest? Fourteen years in the wilderness is not a short time, and given the inherent problems and horrors of life associated with the forest it was no certainty if one would return home safely after this period of time. So, when Lord Ram makes this particular observation in this verse, it clearly implies that he was sure to return and be crowned the king of Ayodhya at the end of fourteen years.]

रहहु तात असि नीति बिचारी । सुनत लखनु भए व्याकुल भारी ॥ ७ ॥
सिअरें बचन सूखि गए कैसें । परसत तुहिन तामरसु जैसें ॥ ८ ॥

rahahu tāta asi nīti bicārī. sunata lakhanu bha'e byākula bhārī. 7.
si'arēm bacana sūkhi ga'e kaisēm. parasata tuhina tamarasu jaisēm. 8.

My dear (tāta)! Stay at home by paying heed to this maxim (as stated in verse no. 6 herein above).¹

When Laxman heard what Lord Ram advised him, he became extremely sad and agitated with grief. (7)

The softly spoken and polite words of Lord Ram seemed like fireball to Laxman, and hearing them he shriveled and shrunk in the same way as the lotus is affected when it is bitten by frost². (8)

[Note—¹Lord Ram had not told Laxman to stay at home because of the terrible conditions in the forest, or about the fear of demons and vagaries of Nature etc. as he had done in the case of Sita. Well, Laxman was a brave warrior, a valiant knight, a

hardened and veteran prince who is trained to face the harshness of world from early childhood. He had fought many a demons standing alongside his brother Lord Ram—the most remarkable battle was with Marich and Subahu while the two brothers were protecting the fire sacrifice of sage Vishwamitra. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 210.}

To wit, Laxman was not supposed to be cowed down by the prospects of a harsh life in the forest.

This is why Lord Ram told him about those things that were more relevant, such as his responsibilities to the parents, kingdom, subjects etc. in the absence of the Lord.

Meanwhile, an important observation can be made here. By now we must have noted that both Sita and Laxman have defied Lord Ram's advice to them not to accompany him to the forest. The Lord had told them both that it is always good for a person to listen to and obey the instructions of his seniors and elders, and if one does not follow this principle than he or she has to suffer a lot. So now, the obvious question that comes to mind is "did Sita and Laxman suffer for being stubborn in their views and not submitting to Lord Ram's wish"? Yes; the answer is unequivocally 'yes, they did suffer as a consequence of not obeying Lord Ram'.

Sita was abducted by the demon king Ravana and kept in captivity in Lanka, where she had a harrowing time. Her lamentations, grief and miserable condition have been narrated vividly in Ram Charit Manas in the following verses: (a) Aranya Kand, (i) Doha no. 29 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-6, 24, 26 that precede it; (b) Sundar Kand, (ii) Doha no. 8 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-12 that precede Doha no. 12; (iv) Doha no. 31 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede it; (c) Lanka Kand, (v) Chaupai line nos. 9-11 that precede Doha no. 99.

Laxman too had to endure a lot of hardships in the forest. For one, he is believed to have kept awake throughout the fourteen years he was with Lord Ram in the forest—in order to guard Lord Ram and Sita from any danger while they slept during the night. This is clearly hinted at in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 90.

Later on in the story, Laxman was severely wounded and was virtually on the verge of death when attacked by Meghanad, the son of the demon king Ravana, during the epic war of Lanka, an event that made even Lord Ram grieve and become exceedingly sad and remorseful—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 54; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 2-17 that precede Doha no. 61.

A maxim or an axiom applies to all, irrespective who he or she is; a statement or principle that tells the Truth has a universal application, and no one is immune to it. Now, if we take this point a little further and analyse the story of Ram Charit Manas minutely, we are to make a remarkable discovery—that even Lord Ram was bound by the same principles he had advocated for Sita and Laxman, for he had to suffer a lot in the forest to uphold the sanctity of this maxim which he himself had advised Sita and Laxman to follow: that one should obey one's parents and serve them—apropos: (i) Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 61 (Sita); and (ii) Doha no. 70 (Laxman).

In the case of Lord Ram, two factors came into play: the first was his father's silence, which meant he had given consent, when Kaikeyi wanted the Lord to go to the forest, and the second was his father's articulate wish, made most earnestly and in clear terms to the Lord that he must not go to the forest—this is strikingly clear and

obvious in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 76—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 78.

Therefore, since Lord Ram was obeying his father when he went to the forest to fulfill his wishes and words of honour, the Lord had a peaceful and eventless life during the first half of his forest sojourn. But when the rewards of the meritorious and auspicious act of obeying his father were fully enjoyed by Lord Ram and its effect waned, then came the time for punishment for defying his father's plea not to proceed to the forest because he won't be able to live in the Lord's absence (as noted herein above), a plea which led to the ultimate death of Dasrath, for Lord Ram's wife Sita was abducted by the demon king Ravana, an unfortunate incident that started a chain of events which entailed a lot of suffering and misery for the Lord, and which culminated in the horrifying War of Lanka. But again, as every bright day is followed by a dark night, which in its turn is followed by another bright day, in a cyclic manner of creation and destruction and a new creation, so when the negative effects of disobeying his father waned and ended, the bright sunshine returned in Lord Ram's life—for he became victorious in the War, got his wife Sita back, returned to his kingdom of Ayodhya, and was crowned its King-Emperor.

²The lotus flower dries up during very cool nights, especially when it frosts. So, this metaphor is employed here to stress that though Lord Ram's words were very soothing to hear and meant for Laxman's own good, yet they made him so extremely agitated as if hot water was being poured on him.]

दो०. उत्तरु न आवत प्रेम बस गहे चरन अकुलाइ ।

नाथ दासु मैं स्वामि तुम्ह तजहु त काह बसाइ ॥ ७१ ॥

dōhā.

utaru na āvata prēma basa gahē carana akulā'i.
nātha dāsu mair̥m svāmi tumha tajahu ta kāha basā'i. 71.

So overcome with affectionate emotions was Laxman that he could not utter a single word for a while. He fell at the feet of Lord Ram and clasped it in great distress.

Laxman somehow gathered courage and said to Lord Ram: 'Oh my Lord! Thou art my Lord, and I am thine servant. Say then, if mine own Lord abandons me, what is there for me to say?'¹ (Doha no. 71)

[Note—¹Said Laxman: "Oh Lord, a servant is bound by duty to obey his Master. Under all circumstances, therefore, the Lord's wish is supreme and sacrosanct. But nevertheless, tell me, thy honourable Lord, thou havest preached me thyself a lot about probity and propriety, so tell me if it is proper for a Lord to abandon his servant? Verily indeed, in all sooth, and without gainsay, it wouldst be equivalent to making me an orphan, because as far as I am concerned, I havest one, and only one, relationship in this world, and it is none but thee. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 72 herein below.}

So, it is for thee to decide mine fate: if thou art so fearful of hell if thine subjects suffer for lack of care just because I accompany thee, then prithee tell me wouldst it not be a also sin for thee if thou forcefully makest me an orphan by abandoning me?"]

चौ०. दीन्हि मोहि सिख नीकि गोसाईं । लागि अगम अपनी कदराई ॥ १ ॥

नरबर धीर धरम धुर धारी । निगम नीति कहूँ ते अधिकारी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

dīnhi mōhi sikha nīki gōsā'īm. lāgi agama apanī kadarā'īm. 1.

narabara dhīra dharama dhura dhārī. nigama nīti kahum'tē adhikārī. 2.

Laxman said to Lord Ram: 'Oh Lord! Whatever advice that you have given to me is indeed sound and proper, but it is due to the weakness of my heart (that is driven by the compulsion of love for you that is deeply imbedded in it) that I feel unable to follow it, as it seems absolutely impractical to me¹. (1)

Those who believe in upholding the principles of right conduct and propriety, those who are champions in the philosophy of the Vedas and the gospels of other scriptures, and profess strict adherence to them—such people are noble and honourable indeed². (2)

[Note—¹Said Laxman: "Oh Lord, thou asks me to stay back at Ayodhya, which means separation from thee and not being to serve thee at all the moments of mine life. Well Lord, no matter how good this advice mayest be for others, and no matter what adversity wouldst befall me due to mine determination to follow thee wherever thou go, I am firm in my mind and heart that I wouldst cope with everything but not the excruciating pain of separation from thee. No; I am sorry that I am unable to obey thine commands on this single point. Lord, punish me in any way thou wouldst prefer and I shalt willingly accept it, but I will not follow this one advice of thine, for my heart wrenches in pain by the mere thought of separation from thee! Lord, I can't live even for a fraction of a second without thee, and life is meaningless sans thou for me. No Lord; I won't leave thee no matter what comes!

²But oh Lord, when have I ever claimed to be such a person? I don't care if the world wouldst denounce me for not obeying the Lord, especially when thou havest cited sound reasons why I shouldst stay back at Ayodhya, such as to look after the kingdom and its subjects in thy absence. But oh Lord, principles of righteous conduct are a matter to be observed by noble men who are concerned about their reputation, good name and destiny, but they art naught meant for a humble man who hast only one destiny, which is to serve his Lord, a man who has lost his heart to the Lord and whose life is centered around his love and submission for his beloved Lord—for doth thou naught wot that 'love is blind'? Say, how canst a blind man walk without a stick? Lord, for me thou art this 'blind man's stick'! Therefore, nothing doing; I am coming along with thee!"]

मैं सिसु प्रभु सनेहँ प्रतिपाला । मंदरु मेरु कि लेहिं मराला ॥ ३ ॥

गुर पितु मातु न जानउँ काहू । कहउँ सुभाउ नाथ पतिआहू ॥ ४ ॥

mair̥ṁ sisu prabhu sanēham̐ pratipālā. mandaru mēru ki lēhir̥ṁ marālā. 3.
gura pitu mātu na jāna'um̐ kāhū. kaha'um̐ subhā'u nātha pati'āhū. 4.

Oh Lord! I am like an infant you have been raised in the cradle symbolized by the Lord's love for me. [Like a child who has never set foot on the ground because his mother loved him so much that she always kept him close to her bosom, you have always loved me so dearly that I never could imagine a world separate from you! Your love has nourished me like a mother's milk nourishes the child.]

Say, can a little swan ever lift a heavy mountain such as Mt. Mandarachal or Mt. Meru? [To wit, just as it is impossible for a small bird like a swan to lift a heavy mountain, so it is impossible for me to carry the burden of a life without you. It's unimaginable, impractical, and untenable.] (3)

Oh Lord! I tell you most sincerely and honestly, believe me, that except you I don't know anyone else, I don't have nor do I know of any other relationship, whether it is a Guru (preceptor and teacher), a father or mother, or for that matter anyone else.

[In all sooth and without gainsay, oh Lord, the only relationship I am aware of, the only kin I have in this world, and the only person to whom I am obliged—is you.] (4)

जहँ लगि जगत सनेह सगाई । प्रीति प्रतीति निगम निजु गाई ॥ ५ ॥
मोरे सबइ एक तुझ स्वामी । दीनबंधु उर अंतरजामी ॥ ६ ॥

jaham̐ lagi jagata sanēha sagā'ī. prīti pratīti nigama niju gā'ī. 5.
mōrē saba'i ēka tumha svāmī. dīnabandhu ura antarajāmī. 6.

Oh Lord, whatever sort of ties or relationships that are based on confidence, faith, love and affection that exist in this world, and which have been lauded by the Vedas (5) ---

--- For me, all such ties and relationships are centered in you. For me, you are the only kith and kin in this world. Oh Lord, you are a friend of the meek and the humble, and the one who knows the inner thoughts of all as you dwell inside all. Therefore, you must be aware of the truth of my statement.

[To wit, oh Lord, since you know the inner thoughts of all, and nothing is hidden from you, so you must know that I am truthful in what I say to you.] (6)

धरम नीति उपदेसिअ ताही । कीरति भूति सुगति प्रिय जाही ॥ ६ ॥
मन क्रम बचन चरन रत होई । कृपासिंधु परिहरिअ कि सोई ॥ ८ ॥

dharama nīti upadēsi'a tāhī. kīrati bhūti sugati priya jāhī. 7.
mana krama bacana carana rata hō'ī. krpāsindhu parihari'a ki sō'ī. 8.

The noble virtues of Dharma and Niti (principles of noble conduct and righteousness, of ethics and morality, of piety and propriety) should be preached to someone who

wishes to gain merit, glory and acclaim in this world, or desire to attain some noble goal in life or some sort of good fortune. (7)

But tell me oh merciful and compassionate Lord, is it proper and advisable for you to abandon someone who is committed to serve your holy feet (and to have deep love and affection for you) by his thought, deed and words?’¹ (8)

[Note—¹Laxman essentially outlines the qualities of a true ‘Bhakta’ here. A true devotee of the Lord should have the same thoughts and emotions as Laxman had for Lord Ram. A true Bhakta’s life centers on his beloved Lord, and his only aim in life is to serve the Lord God whom he loves from the core of his being. Bhakti entails the truest form of devotion, faith, love, affection and commitment towards the Lord God like Laxman has depicted here for Lord Ram.

We have already read that Sita had made a similar case for herself while telling Lord Ram that for her the only relationship that matters in this world is the Lord himself, and everything else is peripheral and secondary—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 64—to Doha no. 65; (ii) Doha no. 66 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede it; (iii) Doha no. 67 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it.]

दो०. करुनासिंधु सुबंधु के सुनि मृदु बचन बिनीत ।
समुझाए उर लाइ प्रभु जानि सनेहँ सभीत ॥ ७२ ॥

dōhā.

karunāsindhu subandhu kē suni mṛdu bacana binīta.
samujhā’ē ura lā’i prabhu jāni sanēham’ sabhīta. 72.

When Lord Ram, who was an ocean of compassion, mercy and grace, observed the precarious emotional condition of his faithful and loyal brother (subandhu), and heard the latter’s pitiful plea made with great politeness, and with the greatest of earnestness and sincerity, the Lord comforted his disconsolate brother and affectionately embraced him, because the Lord concluded that he was sore affright and overwhelmed with grief (at the prospect of the Lord compelling him to stay back at home)¹. (Doha no. 72)

चौ०. मागहु बिदा मातु सन जाई । आवहु बेगि चलहु बन भाई ॥ १ ॥
मुदित भए सुनि रघुबर बानी । भयउ लाभ बड़ गड़ बड़ि हानी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

māgahu bidā mātu sana jā’ī. āvahu bēgi calahu bana bhā’ī. 1.
mudita bha’ē suni raghubara bānī. bhaya’u lābha baṛa ga’i baḍi hānī. 2.

Lord Ram told Laxman: ‘Go and ask thy mother’s leave (permission) to accompany me, and come back hastily so we can proceed to the forest immediately.’¹ (1)

No sooner Laxman hear these words of Lord Ram, but he was exceedingly glad and exhilarated, as if some great reward has been bestowed upon him, and some grave loss has been averted¹. (2)

[Note—¹Refer also to Tulsidas' book "Geetawali Ramayan", Ayodhya Kand, verse no. 11, stanza line nos. 1-4 where a similar episode has been briefly described.

²Laxman was very pleased that Lord Ram has given him permission to accompany the Lord to the forest. It was his wish fulfilled. On the other hand, if the Lord hadn't allowed him to come along with him to the forest, Laxman would have deemed it to be a great loss at a personal level—refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 70; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 72.]

हरषित हृदयँ मातु पहिं आए । मनहुँ अंध फिरि लोचन पाए ॥ ३ ॥
जाइ जननि पग नायउ माथा । मनु रघुनंदन जानकि साथ ॥ ४ ॥

haraṣita hr̥dayam' mātu pahim ā'ē. manahum' andha phiri lōcana pā'ē. 3.
jā'i janani paga nāya'u māthā. manu raghunandana jānaki sāthā. 4.

Laxman went to his mother (Sumitra) with an exhilarated heart, as if a blind person has regained his eyesight¹. (3)

Though Laxman went physically to his mother and bowed at her feet, but his mind and heart (i.e. his thoughts) were with Lord Ram (the son of Raghu's race—"raghunandana") and Sita (the daughter of king Janak—"jānaki"). (4)

[Note—¹To wit, just like the joy and happiness of a blind man who is able to see once again, Laxman's excitement and exhilaration were unbound when he went to see his mother to bid her good bye before joining Lord Ram to the forest.

When Lord Ram had first advised him to stay at home, Laxman's condition was distressed and shocked like a distraught man who is about to lose his vision. But when the Lord gave his consent to him that he can come along to the forest, Laxman's joy and happiness knew no bounds just like the blind man whose sight has just been restored.

For a true devotee, nothing matters more than being able to serve his dear Lord, to have undiluted love and affection for the Lord, to have complete and true devotion for the Lord, and for whom the Lord is the ultimate destination and the only goal in his life—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha nos. 129, 130, 131; (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 324; (b) Aranya Kand, (iii) Doha no. 16.]

पूँछे मातु मलिन मन देखी । लखन कही सब कथा बिसेषी ॥ ५ ॥
गई सहमि सुनि बचन कठोरा । मृगी देखि दव जनु चहु ओरा ॥ ६ ॥

pūm̐chē mātu malina mana dēkhī. lakhana kahī saba kathā bisēṣī. 5.
gaī sahāmi suni bacana kaṭhōrā. mṛgī dēkhi dava janū cahu ōrā. 6.

When the mother (Sumitra) observed that her son's countenance was sad and he was unusually gloomy, she wondered what might have been the cause of his distress. When she asked Laxman, he told her everything in detail (with an emphasis on his personal decision to go with Lord Ram and Sita to the forest, and that he has already obtained the Lord's permission for this)¹. (5)

No sooner did the mother hear the cruel words of her son than she was overwhelmed with consternation, shock and fear even as a doe feels utterly distraught and alarmed when it finds that it is surrounded on all sides by a raging wildfire (with no route to escape)². (6)

[Note—¹Laxman was skeptical if his mother would agree to let him go to the forest with Lord Ram. So therefore, in order to pre-empt the chances of her objecting to his plans to accompany Lord Ram to the forest, Laxman told his mother that he is firm in his decision to join the Lord, and that he already has Lord Ram's permission for it. This left no choice with Sumitra but to give her own consent to Laxman to go to the forest. The noble heart and thoughts of Sumitra while granting her permission to her son would be self-evident in the verses that follow herein below.

²Sumitra was stunned when she heard Laxman's report. What was she expected to do now; what could she do in this situation? If she insisted that her son Laxman should stay at home, she would imply that she does not trust that Lord Ram would protect him in the forest like a father would his son, that she would be compelling Laxman to do a thing against his wishes, which in turn would make him very upset and forced to lead a life full of sadness and grief that no mother would ideally want, and that she would be forcing Laxman to disobey Lord Ram's orders to come along with him to the forest once the Lord had given them.

On the other hand, she faced the gloomy prospect of her beloved son being separated from her for fourteen long years; there was the fear of what would happen to him in the unknown wilderness, whether or not she will see him again.

The cases of Laxman and Lord Ram were different—because whereas Lord Ram had to obey his father's words given to his step-mother Kaikeyi, no such issue arose in the case of Laxman; the latter would be subjected to untold misery and troubles just because of his love for his brother unlike Lord Ram who was morally bound to keep his father's words of honour.

Sumitra was on a horn of a dilemma. Her condition was like that of a doe that is trapped in a raging wildfire, for Sumitra would have to suffer either way. If she allowed Laxman to go to the forest, she would be allowing her son to willingly undergo hardships and face horrors of forest life, and if she disallowed him then she would compel him to disobey his beloved brother Lord Ram's orders, which in itself would be an unrighteous thing to do, especially when Lord Ram loved Laxman as a father would love his son, and Laxman was totally devoted to his brother as a true devotee is devoted to his Lord.]

लखन लखेउ भा अनरथ आजू । एहिं सनेह बस करब अकाजू ॥ ७ ॥

मागत बिदा सभय सकुचाहीं । जाइ संग बिधि कहिहि कि नाही ॥ ८ ॥

lakhana lakhē'u bhā anaratha ājū. ēhiṁ sanēha basa karaba akājū. 7.
māgata bidā sabhaya sakucāhīṁ. jā'i saṅga bidhi kahihi ki nāhīṁ. 8.

Meanwhile, Laxman became very uneasy and nervous as he closely observed the adverse reaction his information had on his mother; he feared that some great tragedy would unfold as it seemed probable now that she would be so moved by emotions of love and attachment for her son that she would deny him permission to go to the forest. (7)

So, when Laxman finally gathered courage to seek his mother's permission to go to the forest, he was at once fearful as well as apprehensive because he did not know whether she would allow him to go, or refuse permission for it¹. (8)

[Note—¹Laxman faced a similar situation earlier when he went to Lord Ram to seek his permission to accompany him to the forest—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precedes Doha no. 70.

Laxman saw that his mother Sumitra had become extremely nervous and distraught when he told her the details of the developments, and especially about his decision to go to the forest with Lord Ram, as well as the Lord giving his consent for it. Sumitra had for a while remained silent in total disbelief; she was so shocked and dumbstruck with grief and sadness that she could not utter a word. This made Laxman himself very anxious and nervous: he feared that his mother would go in a fit and fall unconscious. Should this happen, it would be highly improper an act for him to leave her lying on the ground in an unconscious state and walking away. If this worst situation did not happen, yet there was the apprehension that she may flatly refuse to allow Laxman to go to the forest, citing her right as a mother to deny such permission. Then, what would Laxman do? It would be a precarious situation that would unfold untold misery for Laxman, and these thoughts played heavily on his mind during those crucial moments when he bowed before his mother to seek her permission to leave for the forest.]

दो०. समुझि सुमित्राँ राम सिय रूपु सुसीलु सुभाउ ।
नृप सनेहु लखि धुनेउ सिरु पापिनि दीन्ह कुदाउ ॥ ७३ ॥

dōhā.

samujhi sumitrām' rāma siya rūpu susīlu subhā'u.
nrpa sanēhu lakhi dhunē'u siru pāpini dīnha kudā'u. 73.

When Sumitra contemplated upon the virtuous nature and excellent characters of Lord Ram and Sita, of their beautiful form and amiable disposition towards one and all, as well as the king's (i.e. Dasrath's) love for them, she beat her head in disgust even as she was full of remorse and regret at the evil nature of Kaikeyi who had deceived the (innocent) king and played foul with him (by trapping him into giving her his word of honour that forced Lord Ram to go to the forest, thereby playing the cruel role of the Devil for all of them)¹. (Doha no. 73)

[Note—¹Sumitra rued over the pervert and selfish nature of Kaikeyi, wondering as to how this devilish scheme could ever enter into her mind all of a sudden when it was well known, and even openly declared by Kaikeyi herself, that she loved Lord Ram no less than she loved her own son Bharat*. What was Lord Ram's offense that has so suddenly changed this equation? Why has such wickedness overtaken Kaikeyi's heart? {*Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 15 (Kaikeyi's own assertion); and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 32 (Dasrath's astonishment).}]

चौ०. धीरजु धरेउ कुअवसर जानी । सहज सुहृद बोली मृदु बानी ॥ १ ॥

तात तुम्हारि मातु बैदेही । पिता रामु सब भाँति सनेही ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

dhīraju dharē'u ku'avasara jānī. sahaja suhr̥da bōlī mṛdu bānī. 1.
tāta tumhāri mātu baidēhī. pitā rāmu saba bhām̐ti sanēhī. 2.

Sumitra (drew a deep breath and) realized that the time was not favourable, and it was no use lamenting and regretting. So she braced herself for it by showing exemplary patience and fortitude even as she gathered her wits together to speak to Laxman politely, with a calm exterior, and using soft-spoken words. (1)

She said: 'My dear son (tāta)! Sita ("baidēhī"—the daughter of king Videha, another name for king Janak) is like thine mother, and Lord Ram is akin to thine father who loves thee much and in all possible ways¹. (2)

[Note—¹Sumitra was well aware of the strong bond of brotherly love and affection that existed between Laxman and Lord Ram. Even Laxman has firmly reiterated this fact in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 72 herein above. Hence, she was merely endorsing this fact and reminding Laxman of his moral duties at this crucial juncture in his life, that no matter what comes he ought to live up to his declared love for Lord Ram.

This conversation between Sumitra and Laxman has also been succinctly narrated in Geetawali Ramayan, in its Ayodhya Kand, verse no. 11, stanza line nos. 5-8.]

अवध तहाँ जहँ राम निवासू । तहँइँ दिवसु जहँ भानु प्रकासू ॥ ३ ॥

जौँ पै सीय रामु बन जाहीं । अवध तुम्हार काजु कछु नाहीं ॥ ४ ॥

avadha tahām̐ jaham̐ rāma nivāsū. taham̐m̐ divasu jaham̐ bhānu prakāsū. 3.
jauṁ pai sīya rāmu bana jāhīm̐. avadha tumhāra kāju kachu nāhīm̐. 4.

Ayodhya is there where Lord Ram lives¹, even as the day exists wherever there is the light of the sun². (3)

If it is certain that Lord Ram and Sita are indeed going to the forest, then it is also sure that you have no work (or reason) to stay here. (4)

[Note—¹A similar idea is expressed a little while later by all the citizens of Ayodhya who decided to join Lord Ram when he was moving out of the city to go to the forest—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 84.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 23.

²In this context, refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 83, which says that when Lord Ram left the city, it looked very ghostly, desolate and dark as if the night of doomsday had descended upon the once prosperous and thriving city.

As soon as the sun sets in the horizon, i.e. 'leaves the sky over the world below and makes its exit', everything is plunged in darkness as night comes in. In a similar way, as soon as Lord Ram left the city of Ayodhya, it became desolate and virtually abandoned by life like a deserted city; the once lively city was, for all practical purposes, engulfed by a dark cloud of distress, gloom and grief that covered it from all sides.]

गुर पितु मातु बंधु सुर साईं । सेइअहिं सकल प्रान की नाई ॥ ५ ॥

रामु प्रानप्रिय जीवन जी के । स्वारथ रहित सखा सबही के ॥ ६ ॥

gura pitu mātu bandhu sura sā'īm. sē'i'ahim sakala prāna kī nā'īm. 5.
rāmu prānapriya jīvana jī kē. svāratha rahita sakhā sabahī kē. 6.

One ought to serve and tend to one's Guru (teacher, moral guide and spiritual advisor), parents (father, mother), brother, gods, and Lord or Master very diligently and most faithfully as one would serve or tend to one's own Pran (i.e. one's own life; one's own self). (5)

Lord Ram is as dear to every living being as his own life is to him. Nay, he is the very soul and spirit of life itself (i.e. there is no life without Lord Ram)¹.

The Lord is a selfless friend and companion to all. (6)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 130 along with Chaupai line nos. 5, 8 that precede it; (ii) Doha no. 131 along with Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes it.]

पूजनीय प्रिय परम जहाँ तें । सब मानिअहिं राम के नातें ॥ ७ ॥

अस जियँ जानि संग बन जाहू । लेहु तात जग जीवन लाहू ॥ ८ ॥

pūjanīya priya parama jahām'tēm. saba māni'ahim rāma kē nātēm. 7.
asa jiyam'jāni saṅga bana jāhū. lēhu tāta jaga jīvana lāhū. 8.

In all sooth and without gainsay, whatsoever kind of relationships that exist in this world, however revered and most affectionate that relationship may be, all have a

meaning and value only as long as they are related to Lord Ram, for otherwise they are good for nothing and null and void¹. (7)

Keep this in mind and go to the forest with the Lord, and, my dear son (tāta), you will be blessed and you will feel fortunate that you have enjoyed the rewards of having a life that was well and fruitfully lived².’ (8)

[Note—¹In verse no. 6 herein above, it is said that Lord Ram is the soul and spirit of all living beings, as well as the essence of life itself. To wit, sans the Lord, the world loses its meaning or charm just like the case of a person’s body from which ‘life has left’, leaving behind a corpse. No one would have to do anything with a dead body; likewise, no one should have anything to do with another person if the latter is not related to Lord Ram by a quiet bond of devotion for the Lord.

According to the philosophy of the Upanishads, Lord Ram represents the ‘pure cosmic consciousness’ that is also known as the ‘Atma’ of a living being; this Atma is the creature’s true identity and his true self. The Atma is a universal entity, and it resides in the gross body of all the creatures to make it ‘live’. That means, without this Atma, the gross body of the living being is as good as dead. Hence, what is the use of establishing a relationship with a person who has no ‘Ram’ or the ‘Atma’ in his body; for such a body is as good as dead.

²Sumitra exhorted her son to serve Lord Ram and Sita as he would serve his own father and mother respectively, for by doing so he would be naturally blessed and acquire merit that would make him feel extremely lucky and fortunate. At the end of the day he will realize that he had lived a very auspicious, fruitful and blessed life.]

दो०. भूरि भाग भाजनु भयहु मोहि समेत बलि जाउँ ।

जौं तुम्हरे मन छाड़ि छलु कीन्ह राम पद ठाउँ ॥ ७४ ॥

dōhā.

bhūri bhāga bhājanu bhayahu mōhi samēta bali jā'um̃.

jauṁ tumharēm̃ mana chāḍi chalu kīnha rāma pada ṭhā'um̃. 74.

Sumitra praised Laxman for his decision to serve Lord Ram by accompanying him to the forest when she says: ‘Along with you, I say truthfully, I myself also feel very privileged, blessed and honoured that I have a son who is able to serve Lord Ram selflessly and diligently, a son who has found succour and solace by devoting himself in the service at the feet of Lord Ram, with a pure heart that is free from all sorts of deceits and pretensions.’ (Doha no. 74)

चौ०. पुत्रवती जुबती जग सोई । रघुपति भगतु जासु सुतु होई ॥ १ ॥

नतरु बाँझ भलि बादि बिआनी । राम बिमुख सुत ते हित जानी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

putravatī jubatī jaga sōī. raghupati bhagatu jāsu sutu hōī. 1.
nataru bām̐jha bhali bādi bi'ānī. rāma bimukha suta tēm hita jānī. 2.

Continuing with what she said in Doha no. 74 herein above, Sumitra said: 'A woman is deemed to be blessed and fortunate if she has a son who is devoted to Lord Ram'¹. (1)

Otherwise, it is better for her to remain childless, for if she erroneously thinks that merely having a son is good for her, even though that son is opposed to Lord Ram, then truly that lady has a wrong conception of what is good and what is bad for her, and as surely is she most unfortunate, unlucky, possessed by evil spirit, and pervert in her mind². (2)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 116.

²A similar idea is expressed in Tulsidas' book "Kavitawali Ramayan", Uttar Kand, verse no. 40.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 96.]

तुम्हरेहिं भाग रामु बन जाहीं । दूसर हेतु तात कछु नाहीं ॥ ३ ॥
सकल सुकृत कर बड़ फलु एहू । राम सीय पद सहज सनेहू ॥ ४ ॥

tumharēhiṁ bhāga rāmu bana jāhīṁ. dūsara hētu tāta kachu nāhīṁ. 3.
sakala sukr̥ta kara baṛa phalu ēhū. rāma sīya pada sahaja sanēhū. 4.

Lord Ram is going to the forest to make you feel extremely blessed and lucky¹, and methinks, oh my dear son (tāta), that there is no other reason for it². (3)

The greatest and the best reward of all meritorious deeds done by one in life is to be able to have natural and abiding affection for the holy feet of Lord Ram and Sita (as they were personified forms of Brahm, the Supreme Being, and the Lord's dynamic cosmic powers known as Shakti respectively) (as well as to be able to selflessly and diligently serve and adore the Lord)³. (4)

[Note—¹Sumitra means that while the Lord was in Ayodhya, there were so many people who would eagerly serve him; but now in the forest, only Laxman would have this privilege. Since Lord Ram loved Laxman very much, and Laxman always wished to serve the Lord as much as he can, whole-heartedly and with utmost devotion, the Lord decided that he (Laxman) ought to be given some days when he can serve the Lord exclusively, without any interference, to his heart content. Since while staying in Ayodhya this was not possible, Lord Ram decided to move out of the city to the forest so that Laxman would have the sole privilege of serving his beloved Lord without anyone coming in the way.

In Valmiki's Ramayana we read that the citizens of Ayodhya have praised this good fortune of Laxman that he shall be able to serve Lord Ram exclusively in the forest. They told him that he is extremely fortunate and lucky that he is going with

Lord Ram to the forest; it is like the rise of the sun of good fortune for him. {Refer: Valmiki's Ramayana, Ayodhya Kand, Canto 40, verse nos. 25-26.}

²There is another way of interpreting this particular verse. Laxman was a manifestation of Lord Seshnath, the celestial serpent who is believed to hold the burden of earth on his thousand hoods. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 197; (b) Lanka Kand, (ii) Doha no. 54; (iii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 77; (iv) Chanda line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 83.}

The demons, led by their king Ravana, had become a great burden for mother earth, and Lord Vishnu promised her as well as the gods and the sages that he would personally come down to this mortal world as a prince of Ayodhya, i.e. as Lord Ram, to eliminate this scourge and free the earth of her burden. Now, since Lord Seshnath supported the earth on his hood, the burden of the demons would naturally bear down upon him too. This is what Sumitra may have meant here—that Lord Ram is going to the forest to eliminate the demons in order to remove their burden from his head, and that it is for his (Laxman's) sake that the Lord has decided to do so, and there is no other reason why the Lord should go to the forest.

When the epic War of Lanka actually commences, an unimaginably large assembly of warriors, with huge bodies and heavy weights, and numbering into many millions, would gather at a given place on earth, thereby disturbing its fine balance, with the alarming prospect of the earth toppling over or sinking into the abyss of the cosmos. Then, during the ferocious war, there would be great tremors and vibrations that would rumble across the earth's surface as well as below it, which in their wake may cause rifts and cracks in its rocks and shake its core, causing the earth itself to crack and splinter into huge chunks.

To wit, earth would need support and help during that testing time, and Laxman, in his original form as Lord Seshnath, would be needed on the spot to provide this crucial support to the earth and tackle emergencies to prevent a catastrophe from happening.

³Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, (a) Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 75 herein below; and (b) Uttar Kand, (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 127 which reiterate the same idea.

This verse, along with the ones that follow herein below, narrate the excellent advice that mother Sumitra gave to Laxman to serve him well as a guideline during his stay in the forest presently, and later on in his life as well.]

रागु रोषु इरिषा मदु मोहू । जनि सपनेहुँ इन्ह के बस होहू ॥ ५ ॥
सकल प्रकार बिकार बिहाई । मन क्रम बचन करेहु सेवकाई ॥ ६ ॥

rāgu rōṣu iriṣā madu mōhū. jani sapanēhum'inha kē basa hōhū. 5.
sakala prakāra bikāra bihā'ī. mana krama bacana karēhu sēvakā'ī. 6.

[My dear son—] Guard thyself against the evil of Raag (attachment), Rosha (anger), Irisha (jealousy), Mada (pride, arrogance, ego), Moha (delusions and attractions)—and dost naught allow thine self to be overpowered or influenced by them even in thy dreams¹. (5)

Avoid all sorts of taints of character and vices while serving Lord Ram faithfully, sincerely and diligently, with thy whole being put into that service, and it ought to involve thine Mana (heart and mind), Karma (deeds and actions) and Vachan (words)². (6)

[Note—¹We shall be reading later on in great detail that the saintly crow named Kaagbhusund has listed the vices and taints of the character, that include the ones Sumitra cites now, that undermine the purity of the soul of the creature and act as hindrances in one's spiritual progress towards attaining liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 70—to Doha no. 71.

²Sumitra advised Laxman to be fully committed to serving Lord Ram, be faithful, honest and diligent in that service, to not let any vices or temptations come in his way and corrupt his inner-self, and to use every faculty of his body in the service of the Lord. This way, he will be blessed, and reap great rewards for himself.

Sumitra's advice given to Laxman in these verses should also serve as a practical guideline to all devotees of the Lord, for they tell them how to serve Lord Ram in the best possible and practical way.]

तुम्ह कहूँ बन सब भाँति सुपासू । संग पितु मातु रामु सिय जासू ॥ ७ ॥
जेहिं न रामु बन लहहिं कलेसू । सुत सोइ करेहु इहइ उपदेसू ॥ ८ ॥

tumha kahum̐ bana saba bhām̐ti supāsū. sam̐ga pitu mātū rāmu siya jāsū. 7.
jēhiṁ na rāmu bana lahaḥiṁ kalēsū. suta sō'i karēhu iha'i upadēsū. 8.

Thee havest aught to fear from anything in the forest because thee havest a father and mother like Lord Ram and Sita respectively with thee by thy side in the forest, for they wouldst act as a great and impregnable protective shield around thee at all times (of the day and night, letting no harm comest thy way, even in thy dream)¹.

[To wit, son, do not ever feel affright, do not ever feel alone in the wilderness. Remember: you have your parents with you, and they love you so much that they will protect you and take great care of you to ensure that you are always happy and cheerful; no harm shall ever come near you. So, never feel gloomy or sad in the forest. Live happily and boldly.] (7)

My son (suta)! In whatsoever way Lord Ram and Sita get comfort in the forest and they do not suffer in any way, do whatever is needed to be done with this in mind.² (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 141; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 142.

²It will be remarked here that no where else would we find an example of this kind of excellent advice that a mother would give to her son with respect to serving Lord Ram. Remember: Lord Ram is a personified form of the supreme Brahm, the Supreme Being. Hence, Sumitra's advice to her son Laxman to serve Lord Ram has a universal application that sets benchmarks for all as how to serve the Lord.]

छं०. उपदेसु यहु जेहिं तात तुम्हरे राम सिय सुख पावहीं । १ ।
 पितु मातु प्रिय परिवार पुर सुख सुरति बन बिसरावहीं ॥ २ ॥
 तुलसी प्रभुहि सिख देइ आयसु दीन्ह पुनि आसिष दई । २ ।
 रति होउ अबिरल अमल सिय रघुबीर पद नित नित नई ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

upadēsu yahu jēhim tāta tumharē rāma siya sukha pāvahīm. 1.
 pitu mātu priya parivāra pura sukha surati bana bisarāvahīm. 2.
 tulasī prabhuhi sikha dē'i āyasu dīnha puni āsiṣa da'ī. 3.
 rati hō'u abirala amala siya raghubīra pada nita nita na'ī. 4.

Mother Sumitra concluded her advice to her son Laxman thus: 'My dear son (tāta)! This is mine advice to thee (in brief) that in whatever manner your Lord Ram and Sita¹ get joy and happiness (in the forest)—do it. (Chanda line no. 1)

Let them be so happy and comfortable in the forest that they dost naught ever have the chance to remember their parents (father and mother), their dear ones in the family, their city (Ayodhya), the comforts and happiness that they hadst when they were here¹. (Chanda line no. 2)

Tulsidas says that after giving this advice to the Lord (i.e. Laxman)³, she (Sumitra) granted him her permission (to go to the forest with Lord Ram and Sita), and blessed him once again, saying, --- (Chanda line no. 3)

--- 'I bless thee that thou wouldst have eternal, abiding and undiluted love and affection for the holy feet of Lord Ram and Sita!⁴' (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹Remarkable indeed it is for Sumitra to use the word "your" with respect to Laxman's relationship with Lord Ram and Sita. She wishes to tell Laxman that now onwards a special bond has been established between him, and Lord Ram and Sita; that now he should regard them as his only relation; that as one would be extra careful to look after someone belonging exclusively to him, Laxman is now expected to look after and serve Lord Ram and Sita with this view in mind; that he is so privileged and lucky that he has been granted the sole right to have access to the Lord and be nearest to the divine couple so much so that no one can approach the Lord and Sita without his permission henceforth.

Sumitra is right in this point—for it was only Laxman who would now look after the comforts and needs of Lord Ram and Sita in the forest, making him virtually the sole servitor and servant of the divine couple, which would entitle him to have the privilege of being the closest confidante, friend, companion and advisor of Lord Ram for all times to come. Besides this, the long and exclusive closeness of Laxman with Lord Ram and Sita would create a natural bond of love and affection between the three, and henceforth he (Laxman) would be treated by the couple as their dearest son, a rarest of rare privilege that no one else would ever have.

She says that excepting Laxman everyone else seems to have failed Lord Ram and Sita at this crucial juncture in their lives—even their parents, the citizens, the

servants, the ministers, et al, would not follow them to the forest to look after them and take care of their needs in the unknown and harsh environment of the wilderness. Therefore, it is beyond doubt that Lord Ram and Sita ‘belong’ to Laxman, and him alone, and to no body else; no one has a right of access to them and the right to serve them in the manner Laxman has had the good fortune to get.

²In this context, refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 141—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 142.

³Tulsidas uses the word “Lord” for Laxman here, a word that he usually reserves for Lord Ram. It has great significance. Laxman is going on a divine mission; he is going to serve Lord Ram. A true devotee and a true follower of Lord Ram is worthy of reverence and honour, for such a devotee is more important and honourable than the Lord himself. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 16 that precedes Doha no. 120.}

Even Lord Ram himself has endorsed this view in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 86.

So therefore, Tulsidas wishes to pay his deepest respect to Laxman by calling him his ‘Lord’ as Laxman would be able to serve Lord Ram during the most testing time of the Lord’s life, which is his fourteen years of stay in the forest.

In this context, refer to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 17; (b) Sundar Kand, (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 48; (c) Uttar Kand, (iii) Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 16; (iv) Doha no. 87.

⁴Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 129; (ii) Doha no. 130 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-2, 5, 8 that precede it; (iii) Doha no. 131 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede it; (b) Uttar Kand, (iv) Doha no. 85-b; (v) Sortha no. 87-b.]

सो०. मातु चरन सिरु नाइ चले तुरत संकित हृदयँ ।

बागुर बिषम तोराइ मनहुँ भाग मृगु भाग बस ॥ ७५ ॥

sōraṭhā.

mātu carana siru nā'i calē turata saṅkita hṛdayam.
bāgura biṣama tōrā'i manahum̐ bhāga mṛgu bhāga basa. 75.

Laxman bowed his head before his mother to bid her final good-bye, and with some secret doubt and anxiety nagging at his heart¹, he immediately rushed out from there (to join Lord Ram and Sita) in great haste, in the same way as a trapped deer would dash out of the trap from which it finds itself suddenly freed². (Sortha no. 75)

[Note—¹What was the “doubt and anxiety” in Laxman’s heart (saṅkita hṛdayam)? Well, he feared that Lord Ram and Sita may have decided to proceed to the forest immediately when Laxman left them to come to his mother, for the Lord would have thought to use that opportunity to quickly move out to avoid taking Laxman with him to the forest.

There were other factors too that bore heavily on his mind. He wondered if his wife Urmila would intervene; he wondered how his father Dasrath would react; whether their guru, sage Vasistha, would allow him to go.

This is the reason why Laxman did not even care to meet Urmila for the last time before departure; for he was quite sure that she would be a great hurdle in his way. So, he took leave of his mother and dashed straight to where Lord Ram was.

Now, let us pause for a while and examine Urmila's situation. Nowhere, in any version of the Ramayana, it has been said that she objected to Laxman going with Lord Ram. Why? Because she knew that her husband, Laxman, is going to the forest out of his own free will to serve his Lord Ram, for he was under no compulsion to do so as he was not ordered to go to the forest as was the case with Lord Ram. So therefore, as a good, honourable and conscientious wife it was a her moral duty and obligation to honour her husband's wishes, to aid him in carrying out his duties instead of creating hurdles in his path.

Besides this, she had by now become aware that her own mother-in-law, i.e. Sumitra, has already granted her permission to Laxman, and had even said that the latter ought to treat Lord Ram and Sita as his father and mother respectively, and that he ought to serve them faithfully and diligently. So, Urmila had no worries about the safety and security of her husband on the one hand—for she was certain that Laxman would be well cared for by both Lord Ram and Sita while he is away in the forest, and on the other hand she must not stop him from doing his duties of serving Lord Ram and Sita as ordered by mother Sumitra.

Another reason why Urmila kept out of the way was that she did not wish to create a new kind of dilemma and consternation in the mind of her husband who was already so upset. If she came within view of Laxman at the time of departure, it is but natural that he would become emotional, or may be she herself would not be able to control herself and break down, which would make it so hard for Laxman to leave cheerfully. So, thought she, it is wise to keep away from Laxman's view. Why should she be the cause of more grief and remorse for her husband when he is already overburdened by it?

²The idea is that Laxman hurried from his mother and virtually ran to meet Lord Ram in the same way as a deer would dash to freedom if it finds itself freed from the trap, for it feels that it might be caught again if it does not make haste in its escape while there is time.]

चौ०. गए लखनु जहँ जानकिनाथू । भे मन मुदित पाइ प्रिय साथू ॥ १ ॥

बंदि राम सिय चरन सुहाए । चले संग नृपमंदिर आए ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

ga'e lakhanu jaham' jānakināthū. bhē mana mudita pā'i priya sāthū. 1.

bandi rāma siya carana suhā'ē. calē saṅga nṛpamandira ā'ē. 2.

Laxman went where Lord Ram (the 'Lord of Janki or Sita'—"jānakināth") was waiting for him, and when he found the Lord whom he loved so much there, Laxman was filled with joy and happiness¹. (1)

Laxman paid his respects at the auspicious feet of both Lord Ram and Sita², and then the three went to the palace of the king (Dasrath) (to seek his final blessings and bid him farewell before leaving for the forest) (2)

[Note—¹We have read earlier in Sortha no. 75 herein above that Laxman feared Lord Ram and Sita would hurry out and leave him behind while he was with his mother. This was a cause of great anxiety in his heart. Hence, when he found the Lord waiting for him, he was thrilled and elated.

²By bowing at the feet of Lord Ram and Sita with a cheerful face, Laxman hinted to them that his mother has given him permission to go with the Lord, and that she has done it joyfully, without any regret. So, Lord Ram immediately proceeded to Dasrath's palace to bid his father good-bye.]

कहहिं परसपर पुर नर नारी । भलि बनाइ बिधि बात बिगारी ॥ ३ ॥
तन कृस मन दुखु बदन मलीने । बिकल मनहुं माखी मधु छीने ॥ ४ ॥

kahahim parasapara pura nara nārī. bhali banā'i bidhi bāta bigārī. 3.
tana kṛsa mana dukhu badana malīnē. bikala manahum' mākhī madhu chīnē.
4.

As Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman were on their way to the king's palace, the citizens, who were waiting anxiously and with a heavy heart outside the gates of the palace of Kaushalya, were now certain that the three would go to the forest. A huge rumbling of disenchantment, discontent, remorseful mutterings and sad talks reverberated down the rank and file of the distraught citizenry.

Both the males and the females of the city (formed groups and) said to each other gloomily: 'Say, how unfortunate and strange it is that the Creator (or the god of destiny) would first give us hope of happiness (with the prospect of Lord Ram being anointed on the throne as the Prince-Regent of the kingdom), and then all of a sudden turning tables on us and destroying all our hopes (by causing the Lord to go to the forest).¹' (3)

This sad and unfortunate development made the people extremely gloomy and disconcerted so much so that their bodies seemed to become emaciated and wasted, their heart and mind overwhelmed with sadness and grief, and they felt as crestfallen, dismayed and frustrated¹ as a honey bee from whom honey, which it had so meticulously and laboriously collected over time, has been snatched away². (4)

[Note—¹In this context, refer especially to Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 49 where the citizens have blamed the Creator for all the mischief, and in general to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 46—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 49 where we read about the general atmosphere of grief and regret that prevailed in Ayodhya as soon as the news of Lord Ram going to the forest spread.

The citizens collectively cursed the Creator for he is the god who governs one's destiny.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 206 that says that the ways of the Creator are unpredictable.

²Refer to Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 13 where the metaphor of the bee is cited in relation to the conversation between Kaikeyi and Manthra.

A honey bee works tirelessly and toils hard for countless days to collect honey and store it in the honeycomb. One can imagine the immensity of the helpless bee's pain and sadness of its distraught heart when one day it discovers that a cruel honey-gatherer has squeezed all the honey and emptied the comb when the bee was not there.

Likewise, the citizens of Ayodhya regretted that all their hopes for good days were shattered by the cruelty of destiny, and they were helpless as whatever decisions regarding Lord Ram were made were done behind the walls of the royal palace where they had no access, for had it been done in a public court, and they were given a chance of hearing, then surely they would have revolted vehemently against this ridiculous and most reprehensible decision of the king.]

कर मीजहिं सिरु धुनि पछिताहीं । जनु बिनु पंख बिहग अकुलाहीं ॥ ५ ॥
भइ बड़ि भीर भूप दरबारा । बरनि न जाइ बिषादु अपारा ॥ ६ ॥

kara mījahim siru dhuni pachitāhīm. janu binu paṅkha bihaga akulāhīm. 5.
bha'i baḍi bhīra bhūpa darabārā. barani na jāi biṣādu apārā. 6.

The disgusted and distraught citizens wrung their hands and beat their heads in frustration even as a bird frets and becomes agitated at the loss of its wings¹. (5)

A huge crowd gathered at the gates of the king's palace. It is very difficult to describe the depth and intensity of the agony, grief, sorrow and dismay that prevailed at that time. (6)

[Note—¹A poor bird who has lost its wings feels highly agitated because it cannot fly anymore. Likewise, the citizens fretted and fumed that they felt helpless because they could not have a say in the decision of the king to send Lord Ram to the forest, and even now they cannot stop the Lord from moving out.]

सचिवँ उठाइ राउ बैठारे । कहि प्रिय बचन रामु पगु धारे ॥ ७ ॥
सिय समेत दोउ तनय निहारी । ब्याकुल भयउ भूमिपति भारी ॥ ८ ॥

sacivam' uṭhā'i rā'u baiṭhārē. kahi priya bacana rāmu pagu dhārē. 7.
siya samēta dō'u tanaya nihārī. byākula bhaya'u bhūmipati bhārī. 8.

Meanwhile inside the palace, the chief minister (Sumantra) politely lifted the king (Dasrath) and made him sit up as he informed the latter in soft-spoken words that Lord Ram has just arrived to meet him. (7)

When the king (“bhūmipati”) saw before him his two sons (Lord Ram and Laxman) with Sita, he was stunned and exceedingly upset¹. (8)

[Note—¹No sooner the king saw the three, i.e. Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman, but he realized that all of them would go to the forest. He was shocked beyond measure when the truth sunk in him. If the grief and agony of separation from Lord Ram alone was so severe that it would surely snuff out the life from king Dasrath as he himself has declared*, one can imagine the poor and helpless king’s mental state and the agony of his heart when he saw that even Laxman and Sita were leaving for the forest alongside Lord Ram. {*Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 33.}]

दो०. सीय सहित सुत सुभग दोउ देखि देखि अकुलाइ ।
बारहिं बार सनेह बस राउ लेइ उर लाइ ॥ ७६ ॥

dōhā.

sīya sahita suta subhaga dō'u dēkhi dēkhi akulā'i.
bārahim bāra sanēha basa rā'u lē'i ura lā'i. 76.

The king became exceedingly perplexed and dazed with grief and agony when he saw his two sons (Lord Ram and Laxman) alongside Sita (his daughter-in-law). The king saw them repeatedly as if he could not believe his eyes, the more he saw them the more agitated and vexed he became.

He embraced them repeatedly, and clasped them to his bosom lovingly, with intense emotions. (Doha no. 76)

चौ०. सकइ न बोलि बिकल नरनाहू । सोक जनित उर दारुन दाहू ॥ १ ॥
नाइ सीसु पद अति अनुरागा । उठि रघुबीर बिदा तब मागा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

saka'i na bōli bikala naranāhū. sōka janita ura dārūna dāhū. 1.
nā'i sīsu pada ati anurāgā. uṭhi raghubīra bidā taba māgā. 2.

The distraught and perplexed king (Dasrath) could not utter a word as he was dumbfounded and utterly stunned with an overwhelming sense of vexation and sadness as his heart burnt intensely with agony, remorse, grief and bewilderment. (1)

By and by, Lord Ram (raghubīra¹) bowed his head affectionately and reverentially at the king’s feet² and got up to take his final leave and bid good-bye to his father. (2)

[Note—¹The word “Raghubir” that is used for Lord Ram here is very significant. It literally means ‘the brave Lord of king Raghu’s family’. Indeed, Lord Ram exhibited exemplary braveness, courageousness, boldness and resilience as he did not show any sense of fear or worries vis-à-vis the prospect of living in the wilds, a place that is very fearsome, and well known for its uncountable troubles and unmentionable horrors. Lord Ram also showed steadfastness in following the laws of good conduct

by willingly accepting to go to the forest so that his father's words of honour given to Kaikeyi are kept.

²Lord Ram showed no remorse nor any kind of anger, rancour or ill-will while taking his leave of his father, for the Lord knew very well how much his father loved him, the depth and intensity of that love was no secret from the Lord, and he was also aware of the immensity of suffering, pain, grief and agony through which Dasrath was going through at the moment of his departure. The Lord understood Dasrath's mental state, as well as the moral compulsions under which he was forced to let the Lord proceed to the forest, for he was bound by his word of honour. Lord Ram knew that his father was not sending him to the forest because he did not like or love his son, but he was compelled to do so under obligations of Dharma, which entails that one should keep one's words even at the cost of his life—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 28.

Hence, Lord Ram wished to tell his loving father by his affectionate gestures, a smiling face, a cheerful countenance and polite behaviour at the time of departure that he indeed harbours no ill-will against his father because he does understand the reality as well his father's compulsions, as also the amount of love he (Dasrath) has for him (Lord Ram), and that he (Lord Ram) has the same love and respect for his father at this unfortunate juncture of life as he always has had for him in the past when the things looked fine and favourable.

Another reason why Lord Ram looked cheerful and behaved normally as if he was going on an errand on the commands of his father, and is not being banished to the forest as some kind of punishment, was to make the parting moments sweet and pleasant. The Lord knew that his father was already suffering intensely and was under great mental agony, and that as soon as he left these sufferings and agonies would mount manifold times; so the Lord did not wish to add to his father's pains and sufferings any more by doing anything or behaving in any way that would hint to Dasrath that the Lord was afflicted by the order of his father to proceed to the forest.

Hence, Lord Ram sported a cheerful disposition and showed that he was happy by his demeanours during those final moments of departure to the forest so as to make the grief of parting less severe and cruel for his loving father.]

पितु असीस आयसु मोहि दीजै । हरष समय बिसमउ कत कीजै ॥ ३ ॥

तात किँ प्रिय प्रेम प्रमादू । जसु जग जाइ होइ अपबादू ॥ ४ ॥

pitu asīsa āyasu mōhi dījai. haraṣa samaya bisama'u kata kījai. 3.

tāta ki'ēm' priya prēma pramādū. jasū jaga jā'i hō'i apabādū. 4.

Lord Ram said to king Dasrath: 'My respected father (pitu)! Please bless me and grant thy permission cheerfully, for why art thou grieving and lamenting at a time when thee ought to feel happy and joyful¹? (3)

My dear father (tāta)! Please be careful and take note that if thou allow thine self to fall in the trap of delusions and grieve and lament for someone whom thy love (that's me, of course), then remember that it wouldst result in bringing infamy to thee, and thou wouldst be ridiculed and subjected to criticism².

[So therefore, my beloved father, grant me thine permission cheerfully, with a smile on thy face and a happy countenance. Let me proceed to the forest free of any guilt and remorse in my heart at having left my father grieving and lamenting for me. It wilst be good for thee as well as for me to make this parting sweet and well made.]’(4)

[Note—¹Lord Ram was hinting to Dasrath that he should be so happy that his son is stepping out to gain fame and glories by fulfilling the divine mandate of eliminating the scourge of the demons, to free the earth of their burden, to remove the fear of the gods, and to grant spiritual bliss and a chance for attaining liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation to countless creatures and sages and hermits living in the forest doing Tapa (austerities and religious practices) for this purpose.

To top it all, the Lord’s going to the forest would unequivocally establish his fame, valour and glories in a manner that would not be possible if he remained confined to his home.

“This is a time to celebrate, and not to grieve and lament the way thou art doing; it’s ridiculous for thee to behave this way,” Lord Ram told his father, king Dasrath. The Lord added: “My dear father, hark attentively and tell me one thing—if suppose I was on mine way to the forest on some great military assignment on thy behalf, then tell me honestly wouldst thee be grieving and weeping in the way thou art doing now? Dost it behoove of a brave and mighty king of thine stature to behave like a woman, for a king ought to be happy and delighted to bid good-bye to his brave son who is going on an adventure to bring laurels to himself and the family? Thou shouldst be encouraging me in case I had demurred, but the opposite seems to be happening here. Thy art behaving as if I am going to the gallows, as if I am doomed, and am not going out into the open world to gain honours and glory and bring laurels for my self by the strength of mine own arms, rather than from what comes to me by the virtue of inheritance. Hence, my dear father, cheer up and bid me farewell with a smile, so that my time in the forest wouldst be spent happily, for if I move out with the memory of thy sad face and tears in thine eyes, I shalt suffer myself a lot; doth thou want this to happen?”

²Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 43 in this context.

Lord Ram warned his father of the consequences of the way he was behaving, by lamenting, weeping, grieving and sighing like a miserable wretch who has lost everything. The Lord told his father that the world recognized Dasrath as a very brave, courageous, righteous and law-abiding fortitude king who would never yield to the temptation of being driven by emotions and sentiments when it came to upholding principles that were held sacrosanct by him—and one of such principles was to keep his words of honour given to someone. In the present case this relates to his promise made to Kaikeyi, and now that she wants the king to fulfill or redeem that promise, which entails Lord Ram going to the forest, the king is expected to honour it cheerfully. If he doesn’t, then obviously he would invite universal scorn and ridicule. The world would say: “Look here, all this talk of Dharma and Principles made by king Dasrath were limited to the situation when they applied to others, but when it came down to his personal interest, he bent and buckled underneath. To wit, he is very pretentious and self-interested, for while sitting in the court of justice and passing orders on his subjects on a similar matter pertaining to others, he would act in a

dispassionate way and very differently than when a similar development comes knocking at his own door, for then all his talk of Dharma and Principles go for a big toss.”]

सुनि सनेह बस उठि नरनाहाँ । बैठारे रघुपति गहि बाहाँ ॥ ५ ॥

सुनहु तात तुम्ह कहँ मुनि कहहीं । रामु चराचर नायक अहहीं ॥ ६ ॥

sunī sanēha basa uṭhi naranāhām̐. baiṭhārē raghupati gahi bāhām̐. 5.
sunahu tāta tumha kahum̐ muni kahahīm̐. rāmu carācara nāyaka ahahīm̐. 6.

When king Dasrath heard these polite and good-intentioned words of Lord Ram, he got up affectionately, caught hold of Lord Ram’s arms, and made the Lord sit near him. (5)

Dasrath said to Lord Ram: ‘Listen dear son (sunahu tāta)! Great sages and seers tell about you that you are the Lord of all living beings, nay, of the entire creation consisting of animate beings as well as inanimate things¹. (6)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 93 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it.

This verse clearly shows that Dasrath was aware of the true identity of Lord Ram, that he was a personified form of the Supreme Being. As early as the time of the Lord’s birth, Dasrath had known this fact—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-6 that precede Doha no. 193.

A question arises that if it was so, then why was he so moved by emotions of love for Lord Ram so as to wail and grieve so woefully as if he was losing his son, instead of being happy that the Lord is poised to fulfill his divine mandate of eliminating the demons? It is because in his previous life as king Manu, Dasrath had done Tapa (penance) and when the Supreme Being revealed himself before him to ask him to seek boons, the king had wanted to have the Lord as his son, and not only that, but he also wished to have so intense personal love and bond for that ‘son’ that he wouldn’t live without him—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 149; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precede Doha no. 151.

Dasrath himself has reiterated this fact to Kaikeyi a little while ago in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 33.

To wit, king Dasrath’s behaviour in this life was actually in accordance to the boon the Supreme Being granted to him in his previous life as king Manu.

So, every now and then Dasrath would forget who Lord Ram actually was, and instead he was overcome with intense love for the Lord as if the latter was his worldly son due to the effect of that boon.

In such situations some great sage or enlightened soul would make him wake up from his dream and made him aware of the reality. For instance, when sage Vishwamitra came to Dasrath to ask the latter to send Lord Ram and Laxman with him to eliminate the demons who were destroying his fire sacrifice in his hermitage in the forest, the king initially refused and said that he himself was ready to go with the sage with his army to kill the demons, but he won’t let Lord Ram and Laxman part from him because he can’t live without Lord Ram. At that time, sage Vasistha, the king’s guru and royal priest of Ayodhya, had privately reminded Dasrath about who

Lord Ram was and what his mission in this world was, after which the king cheerfully gave his consent to sage Vishwamitra to take the two brothers with him. This episode is narrated in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 206—to Doha no. 208.

At present too, Lord Ram and Laxman were going to the forest to eliminate the demons, so why was Dasrath not willing to let them go as he did in the case of sage Vishwamitra on the earlier occasion ? This is because at that time it was done at the sage's request, but at this time it is being done under duress as the poor king was coerced to give his consent due to the pervert nature and wickedness of a queen, i.e. Kaikeyi, who extracted this consent by using deceit and force upon the helpless king who was unwittingly trapped in a snare from which he could not find a way to extricate himself. What was this trap? It was that first the king was made to make a vow for redeeming his pending promise given to Kaikeyi, and then to make a pledge to honour his words by citing the tradition of the illustrious family that upholds the sanctity of words of honour and promised made to others. So, Dasrath had fallen in a snare from which he couldn't get out. This was the cause of his vexation, consternation and dilemma. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 27—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 29; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precede Doha no. 30; (iii) Doha no. 33 along with Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes it (where Kaikeyi is obviously blackmailing Dasrath to make him surrender to her pervert wish).}]

सुभ अरु असुभ करम अनुहारी । ईसु देइ फलु हृदयँ बिचारी ॥ ७ ॥

करइ जो करम पाव फल सोई । निगम नीति असि कह सबु कोई ॥ ८ ॥

subha aru asubha karama anuhārī. īsu dē'i phalu hṛdayam' bicārī. 7.
kara'i jō karama pāva phala sō'ī. nigama nīti asi kaha sabu kō'ī. 8.

The Lord God judges a person in his heart and gives him his due rewards depending upon the type of deed the person does; i.e. the rewards granted by the Lord to a person depend upon whether the deeds done by him are good and righteous, or bad and evil. (7)

A person suffers or enjoys the consequences of what he does, for everyone reaps what he sows¹, and this is a maxim and the universal rule that is upheld even by the Vedas and the Purans. (8)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 92; (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 219; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 282.

In this context, refer also to Tulsidas' book "Vairagya Sandipani", verse no. 5.]

दो०. औरु करै अपराधु कोउ और पाव फल भोगु ।

अति बिचित्र भगवंत गति को जग जानै जोगु ॥ ७७ ॥

dōhā.

auru karai aparādhū kō'u aura pāva phala bhōgu.
ati bicitra bhagavanta gati kō jaga jānai jōgu. 77.

King Dasrath rued and regretted at the ways of the Creator, saying: 'It is a wonder that someone else is made to suffer for the actions of another¹. Indeed, the ways of the Lord of the world (i.e. the Creator; "bhagavanta") are so strange and mysterious that no one can predict what way the things would go.²' (Doha no. 77)

[Note—¹Dasrath means to say that the real culprit is Kaikeyi and not he, but it is he who has to bear the brunt of her evil deeds by being made to suffer the agony and grief of separation from Lord Ram. Even the world would say that it was Dasrath who sent Lord Ram to the forest; Kaikeyi escaped direct blame. It is indeed so paradoxical and ironic that the real culprit escapes unscathed, and an innocent person is caught in a snare and unwittingly has to bear the brunt of infamy and scorn of the world for no fault of his.

The parting conversation between Dasrath and Lord Ram has been soulfully narrated in Tulsidas' Geetwali Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, verse no. 12.

²The often whimsical and arbitrary ways of the Lord of Destiny has been stressed at many places in Ram Charit Manas. For instance, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 48; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 49; (iii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 58; (iv) Chanda line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 201; (v) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 206; (vi) Chanda line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 276.

Refer also to: (a) Kavita-wali Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, verse nos. 18-20.]

चौ०. रायँ राम राखन हित लागी । बहुत उपाय किए छलु त्यागी ॥ १ ॥

लखी राम रुख रहत न जाने । धरम धुरंधर धीर सयाने ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

rāyam' rāma rākhana hita lāgī. bahuta upāya ki'ē chalu tyāgī. 1.

lakhī rāma rukha rahata na jānē. dharama dhurandhara dhīra sayānē. 2.

The king (Dasrath) made sincere and honest attempts, free from any sort of pretensions or deceit, to detain Lord Ram and prevent him from going to the forest¹.
(1)

But the distraught and hapless king realized that Lord Ram has no intention to stay back, for the Lord was known for his excellent characters as the one who was skilled in upholding the principles of Dharma (righteousness, probity, propriety, noble thought and conduct) at all costs (dharama dhurandhara), as well as the Lord who had fortitude and equanimity, as the Lord who was wise, patient, resilient and steadfast in keeping his vows (dhurandhara dhīra sayānē). (2)

[Note—¹Though it is not clear here in this verse what Dasrath may have said to Lord Ram in his earnest attempt to stop the Lord from proceeding to the forest, but it is quite possible that he told his son that he was innocent and not at all a party to the conspiracy hatched by Kaikeyi, who had compelled him, under duress, to concede to

her ludicrous and outrageous demands because she had cunningly trapped him to do so under a great oath, but no sooner was the plot revealed to him but he had vehemently opposed it, even falling at the feet of his wicked wife to spare his life this time like a man pleading for mercy and begging for his life before a cruel and merciless tyrant—but nothing worked. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precede Doha no. 28; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 29; (iii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 31—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 33; (iv) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 34; (v) Doha no. 35—to Doha no. 36; (vi) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 44—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 45.}

²In this context, refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 10; (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 41—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 42; (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 55.

Lord Ram was well aware of the exceptional grief and pain which his father was going through, but he was also aware of the fact that his father had already given his word of honour to Kaikeyi, and that too under a severe oath. What Dasrath was saying now in order to prevent the Lord from going to the forest was because he was driven by emotions of love for his son and has become very sentimental, for if he actually wanted Lord Ram to stay back he should have vehemently cursed his own wife Kaikeyi, who was sitting nearby, and severely punish her for using trick and deceit to compel the king in making a vow that would have dire consequences for the whole kingdom and its administrative machinery, besides compelling the king to violate established traditions ordaining that the eldest son of a king ascends the throne, besides inviting unprecedented infamy for the whole family, creating utter chaos and anarchy everywhere, left, right and center, as well as unleashing immeasurable misery for everyone.

By asking Lord Ram to stop from going to the forest, the king was committing another mistake: for it would compel the Lord to break the principles of Dharma which entails that a son should always ensure that his father's words of honour given to someone are respected. It would also create ill-will and an unprecedented scene of dissension, discord, rift and strife in the family as it would mean that Lord Ram, his mother Kaushalya, and his father Dasrath, all have joined hands against Bharat's anointment to the throne as desired by Kaikeyi, Bharat's mother, and it was also sure that she would raise hell, throw wild tantrums, tear her hairs and shout like mad if Bharat is denied the throne and Lord Ram does not move out to the forest.

So therefore, Lord Ram, who was always calm and composed in his demeanours, who treated all circumstances equally, with equanimity and fortitude, and for whom Bharat was like his own reflection as he dearly loved his younger brother, decided to keep his cool and act according to his own wisdom and conscience, which told him to proceed to the forest rather than to be moved by influences of temporary emotions.]

तब नृप सीय लाइ उर लीन्ही । अति हित बहुत भाँति सिख दीन्ही ॥ ३ ॥

कहि बन के दुख दुसह सुनाए । सासु ससुर पितु सुख समुझाए ॥ ४ ॥

taba nrpa sīya lā'i ura līnhī. ati hita bahuta bhāmṭi sikha dīnhī. 3.
kahi bana kē dukha dusaha sunā'ē. sāsū sasura pitu sukha samujhā'ē. 4.

Then (when the king realized that it is futile to pursue Lord Ram to stay home) the king held Sita and clasped her to his bosom even as he advised her in a variety of ways (against going to the forest). (3)

He told her regarding the countless troubles and difficulties of the forest, as well as her obligations to see that her mother and father in-laws were happy (which could only happen if she stayed at home instead of going to the wilds)¹. (4)

[Note—¹Earlier, Kaushalya and Lord Ram too had tried to persuade Sita in the same way—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 59—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 60 (Kaushalya); and (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 61—to Doha no. 63.}]

सिय मनु राम चरन अनुरागा । घरु न सुगमु बनु बिषमु न लागा ॥ ५ ॥
औरउ सबहिं सीय समुझाई । कहि कहि बिपिन बिपति अधिकाई ॥ ६ ॥

siya manu rāma carana anurāgā. gharu na sugamu banu biṣamu na lāgā. 5.
aura'u sabahim sīya samujhā'ī. kahi kahi bipina bipati adhikā'ī. 6.

Sita's heart and mind ("manu") were so exclusively focused into having affection and devotion for the august feet of Lord Ram, which made her very attached to the Lord's feet, that home did not appeal to her as being more comfortable than the forest, and neither did the horrors of the forest looked difficult and troublesome to her¹. (5)

Everyone else² also tried to persuade Sita to remain at home by telling her about the innumerable troubles and uncountable horrors of the forest that were one greater than the other³ (in their futile attempt to dissuade her from going to the wilds).

[Note—¹Sita was very clear in her mind and heart in this respect, and she had minced no words to articulate her position in this regard very clearly in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 64—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 67.

²Who were these "others" who tried to persuade Sita not to go to the forest? They were the wives of the chief minister (Sumantra), the guru (Vasistha), and other senior ladies of the royal household as well as the kingdom who had assembled there when the news spread of the calamitous event unfolding in the palace of the king. Refer to Chaupai line no. 7 herein below.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 62—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 63.]

सचिव नारि गुर नारि सयानी । सहित सनेह कहहिं मृदु बानी ॥ ७ ॥

तुम्ह कहूँ तौ न दीन्ह बनबासू । करहु जो कहहिं ससुर गुर सासू ॥ ८ ॥

saciva nāri gura nāri sayānī. sahita sanēha kahahim mṛdu bānī. 7.

tumha kahum̐ tau na dīnha banabāsū. karahu jō kahahim sasura gura sāsū. 8.

Wives of the chief minister (Sumantra), the guru (Vasistha), and other senior ladies of the royal household and the city, who were wise and conscientious, gathered together and spoke lovingly to Sita in a sweet voice as follows: --- (7)

‘Thou havest naught been ordered to go to the forest; so thee ought to do as suggested by thine father-in-law (Dasrath), the guru (Vasistha) and mother-in-law’¹. (8)

[Note—¹We have read that Dasrath and Kaushalya have asked Sita to remain at home, and Lord Ram too had made a similar request, but there is no mention anywhere of Vasistha saying anything to Sita in clear terms.

This point is very important and significant here—for it means that these ladies had simply cited the guru in their attempt to put pressure on Sita to stay home, though the guru, sage Vasistha, had said nothing. Had sage Vasistha intervened and directly told her to stay back, Sita would have been compelled to comply, for it is an unpardonable sin to disobey one’s guru. Sage Vasistha knew everything as he was the son of the Creator Brahma*; he knew about the main mission of Lord Ram, which was to eliminate the demons by going to the forest and later on to Lanka, and as this was very necessary and could not be avoided, Vasistha had kept a discreet silence in the whole episode of Lord Ram going to the forest. {*Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 48 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it.}

Earlier, when Dasrath had sent sage Vasistha to inform Lord Ram to prepare for the anointment ceremony, the sage showed no enthusiasm, and he was very cold and brief when he told Lord Ram about the plans, even subtly suggesting to the Lord to be careful in whatever he chooses to do by exercising restraint and wisdom in his decisions—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 9; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 10.

It ought to be noted here that sage Vasistha was not even present on the occasion. This would be clear a little while later when we read that after finally taking leave of Dasrath, Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman went to the gate of sage Vasistha’s home to take leave of him—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 80. At that time also, Vasistha did not stop Lord Ram from proceeding to the forest.]

दो०. सिख सीतलि हित मधुर मृदु सुनि सीतहि न सोहानि ।

सरद चंद चंदिनि लगत जनु चकई अकुलानि ॥ ७८ ॥

dōhā.

sikha sītali hita madhura mṛdu suni sītahi na sōhāni.

sarada canda candini lagata janu cakaī akulāni. 78.

This advice (as aforementioned) that was given politely and in a sweet way, and which was meant for Sita’s own good, however was not welcomed by her as she did

not like it, just like the case of the female bird known as the Chakvi (ruddy goose) who feels virtually scorched when the otherwise cool rays of the moonlight during the night of the winter season falls on her¹. (Doha no. 78)

[Note—¹A similar idea has been expressed earlier in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupi line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 64, and explained as a note appended thereto.]

चौ०. सीय सकुच बस उतरु न देई । सो सुनि तमकि उठी कैकेई ॥ १ ॥

मुनि पट भूषन भाजन आनी । आगें धरि बोली मृदु बानी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sīya sakuca basa utaru na dēī. sō suni tamaki uṭhī kaikēī. 1.

muni paṭa bhūṣana bhājana ānī. āgēm dhari bōlī mṛdu bānī. 2.

Sita patiently heard everyone advising her to rethink on her decision to go to the forest with Lord Ram, but out of courtesy and modesty she hesitated to reply them, preferring to remain silent instead.

When Kaikeyi heard the advice that the other senior ladies were giving Sita (trying to persuade her to change her decision to go to the forest with Lord Ram), she became infuriated, and got up angrily with a start¹. (1)

She brought in ochre clothes and bowls or pots for collecting water and food (known as the ‘Kamandalu’) that are suitable for hermits and friars, kept them before Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman, and spoke sarcastically but in a sweet tone (as follows in the next verse)². (2)

[Note—¹The episode of Kaikeyi tells us the evil consequences of the vices of jealousy and selfishness that makes a person loose mental balance and all senses of probity and propriety. First, Kaikeyi had no regret or felt any shame when her husband, king Dasrath, fell down humbly at her feet, almost weeping like a condemned criminal about to be sent to the gallows, as he pleaded with her not to press on with her demand of sending Lord Ram to the forest, for it would not only lead to the king’s death but also cause unprecedented havoc in the kingdom—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 34.

And now, she is not a wee whit ashamed that she is behaving like a mad person or one possessed by the Devil in front of so many witnesses who had collected there by this time.

²It is apparently clear that Kaikeyi and her wicked hunchback maid, Manthra, had done their homework to perfection. How can one expect otherwise that such things as ochre clothes worn by mendicants and hermits, as well as the bowl in which they collect food and water would be found so quickly in a royal palace?

Obviously, after sending Kaikeyi on her mission, Manthara, the crooked and wicked hunchback maid of hers, had made all haste to gather these things and make them ready for Kaikeyi so that she can use them at the right moment. So, during the interval when Lord Ram had gone to his mother to seek her permission, this wicked maid stealthily came in and told her mistress Kaikeyi about these things, telling her

that she is keeping them at such-and-such place and Kaikeyi ought to fetch them at the right moment.

That there were three sets of clothes and bowls meant one set each for Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman will be evident in Doha no. 79 herein below where we read that all the three had donned clothes fit for hermits and friars, and then left home for the forest after paying their obeisance at the feet of their guru (sage Vasistha) and other Brahmins who had collected there.]

नृपहि प्रानप्रिय तुम्ह रघुबीरा । सील सनेह न छाड़िहि भीरा ॥ ३ ॥

सुकृत् सुजसु परलोकु नसाऊ । तुम्हहि जान बन कहिहि न काऊ ॥ ४ ॥

अस बिचारि सोइ करहु जो भावा । राम जननि सिख सुनि सुखु पावा ॥ ५ ॥

nr̥pahi prānapriya tumha raghubīrā. sīla sanēha na chāḍihi bhīrā. 3.
sukṛtu sujasu paralōku nasā'ū. tumhahi jāna bana kahihi na kā'ū. 4.
asa bicāri sō'i karahu jō bhāvā. rāma janani sikha suni sukhu pāvā. 5.

Kaikeyi said to Lord Ram: ‘Thou art very dear to the king as if thou wert his very own life. Those who art under the influence of emotions of affection and love, and act in accordance with such emotions, wouldst find it well neigh impossible to overcome them. (3)

They become so immune to the fear of having infamy and the negative consequences of being ruled by emotions that they do not care for ruining their merit, their good fame and reputation, or their fate. Hence, none of such persons wouldst tell thee to proceed to the forest¹. (4)

Keeping this in mind and taking all factors in consideration, do as thou thinkest fit and proper.²

Lord Ram heard his mother (Kaikeyi) patiently and felt glad to hear her advice³. (5)

[Note—¹Kaikeyi here is hinting at her husband, king Dasrath, as well as the senior ladies, such as the wives of ministers, their guru, and other senior citizens, who had collected there to try to stop Sita and Lord Ram from going to the forest.

She says that they are not concerned about the fact that if the king goes back on his words-of-honour given to her, it would lead to him getting infamy in history as a king who broke his promises. It is because all these people are driven by only one emotion, they have only one consideration, and only one thing in their minds that seems to have eclipsed all other considerations—and it is love and affection for an individual, i.e. Lord Ram.

²She taunts Lord Ram and says: “Thou art famed as the one who is very wise, one who has patience and courage to take the right decision, who acts calmly and composedly under adversity, who weighs the pros and cons of a situation judiciously, with a composed mind and neutral heart, before taking any decision, and once taken, to act on it.

So therefore, I prithee, consider all aspects of this situation, and act as thou thinkest fit and proper. Thine father as well as the group of senior ladies who havest gathered here, are all driven by emotions, and they art not ready to think of anything else but what has firmly entered into their heads, for they dost naught realize the consequences of forcing thee to break thine father's words-of-honour given to me, as well as the negative impression it wouldst have on thy brother Bharat, whom thee thyself sayest is very dear to thee, for he wouldst think that thou desisted from going to the forest just in order to prevent Bharat from getting the chance to ascend the throne. Say, wouldst that naught cause ill-will betwixt thee and Bharat? ”

³Lord Ram was happy that Kaikeyi has behaved in the way she did in front of so many witnesses, as well as the fact that she had angrily brought hermit-like clothes and bowls and dumped them before Lord Ram, his wife Sita, and his brother Laxman— thereby making her intentions clear. This ensured that no one would later on blame Lord Ram, Sita or Laxman for defying their collective advice that they should not go to the forest, for by now it was crystal clear that Kaikeyi was hell-bent in sending them to the wilds!]

भूपहि बचन बानसम लागे । करहिं न प्रान पयान अभागे ॥ ६ ॥
 लोग बिकल मुरुछित नरनाहू । काह करिअ कछु सूझ न काहू ॥ ७ ॥
 रामु तुरत मुनि बेषु बनाई । चले जनक जननिहि सिरु नाई ॥ ८ ॥

bhūpahi bacana bānasama lāgē. karahim na prāna payāna abhāgē. 6.
 lōga bikala muruchita naranāhū. kāha kari'a kachu sūjha na kāhū. 7.
 rāmu turata muni bēṣu banā'ī. calē janaka jananihi siru nā'ī. 8.

Kaikeyi's pointed remarks seemed to hit king Dasrath like sharp arrows directed at him¹.

The distraught and despondent king wondered that he is so unfortunate that his cursed Pran (life-forces) still do not leave him and let him lie (die) in peace². (6)

The people who had gathered there were very agitated and overcome with sorrows, while the distraught king became unconscious with shock and grief. It was such a grave and precipitous situation that everyone present was baffled, for no one could see any way out the predicament; none knew what to do and what to say. (7)

Lord Ram did not want to waste any more time, and so he immediately donned himself in a hermit's attire and departed from there after bowing his head at the feet of his father (Dasrath) and mother (Kaikeyi)³. (8)

[Note—¹Kaikeyi's remarks made in verse nos. 3-5, along with her putting clothes and bowls suitable for hermits before Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman as narrated in verse no. 2 herein above, hit Dasrath sharply, because he thought that they were directed exclusively at him as he was the one who had clearly told Kaikeyi how much he loved Lord Ram, and that he won't survive without the Lord—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 33; (ii) Doha no. 34 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it.

²The king was so shocked and dismayed that he had no more desire to life. He bitterly regretted why his soul was not making its exit from his body, and letting him die in peace. In this context, refer to what Sita told Lord Ram in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 67—that if she was made to live in Ayodhya while being subjected to the pain of separation from Lord Ram, it will be because her soul was sinful and would have to undergo punishment, for otherwise she would die.

³Remarkable indeed it is that even after what Kaikeyi had done to Lord Ram, he still had shown great respect for her and treated her as his ‘mother’ by bowing before her before departure. Normally one would have expected that the Lord would bow to his father alone, and then turn abruptly to depart, totally neglecting Kaikeyi.

There is another instance where Lord Ram made haste to leave the place, instead of unduly lingering on, as he feared that his prolonged presence would fuel Kaikeyi’s wrath, and she would burst out with new taunts and tantrums. That occasion was at the time when the Lord departed to take permission from his own mother, Kaushalya, after visiting Dasrath and Kaikeyi—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 45 read with Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 46.]

दो०. सजि बन साजु समाजु सबु बनिता बंधु समेत ।
बंदि बिप्र गुर चरन प्रभु चले करि सबहि अचेत ॥ ७९ ॥
dōhā.

saji bana sāju samāju sabu banitā bandhu samēta.
bandi bipra gura carana prabhu calē kari sabahi acēta. 79.

Preparing himself in every way for life in the forest¹, and donning the attire suitable for that life, Lord Ram, along with his dear wife (Sita) and younger brother (Laxman), bowed his head at the feet of Brahmins and his guru (sage Vasistha), and departed from there for his onward journey (to the forest), even as all those present on the occasion were so stunned and overwhelmed with grief of the tragedy that unfolded that they literally lost awareness of themselves and their surroundings. (Doha no. 79)

[Note—¹Lord Ram’s preparation for the forest has been described in Valmiki’s Ramayana, Ayodhya Kand, Canto 31, verse nos. 29-31. These verses inform us that Lord had armed himself well with powerful weapons before departing for the forest.]

चौ०. निकसि बसिष्ठ द्वार भए ठाढ़े । देखे लोग बिरह दव दाढ़े ॥ १ ॥
कहि प्रिय बचन सकल समुझाए । बिप्र बृंद रघुबीर बोलाए ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

nikasi basiṣṭha dvāra bha'e ṭhārhē. dēkhē lōga biraha dava dārhē. 1.
kahi priya bacana sakala samujhā'ē. bipra bṛnda raghubīra bōlā'ē. 2.

After leaving his palace, the Lord stood at the door of his guru, sage Vasistha. Lord Ram observed that the people were burning with the wildfire of grief and agony of separation from the Lord (biraha dava dārhē). (1)

Lord Ram tried to comfort them and assuage their saddened hearts and sinking feeling by using polite words as best as he could¹.

Then the Lord of the Raghus (i.e. Lord Ram) called the Brahmins (i.e. the elders who were respected in the society). (2)

[Note—¹It is very easy to visualize the scene of that time: a huge crowd of dismayed and distraught citizens had thronged Lord Ram as he moved out of his palace and reached the gates of his guru to bid him farewell. Grief, pain and sorrows were writ large on the crowd's face, and it did not escape Lord Ram. The merciful Lord was himself moved by this overwhelming show of solidarity of the citizens with him, and a scene of lamenting citizens who refused to let him go touched his heart painfully.

But there was nothing that could be done. So, the compassionate Lord paused for a while and addressed his subjects, telling them to have patience, and to show courage and resilience during these adverse times. He told them that at the time of his departure they should not grieve as that would make him sad, for the memory of this sight of grieving citizens would make life very painful for him in the forest. At the time of parting, one ought to put up a brave face and bid a cheerful farewell to those who are going away to far away lands so that they leave happily and keep happy memories with them, which in turn would make life easier for the traveller to foreign lands who goes far away from his near and dear ones.]

गुर सन कहि बरषासन दीन्हे । आदर दान बिनय बस कीन्हे ॥ ३ ॥

जाचक दान मान संतोषे । मीत पुनीत प्रेम परितोषे ॥ ४ ॥

gura sana kahi baraṣāsana dīnhē. ādara dāna binaya basa kīnhē. 3.
jācaka dāna māna santōṣē. mīta punīta prēma paritōṣē. 4.

The Lord made grants to them (i.e. the assembled Brahmins and elders) and assigned them to his guru to redeem them as he deemed fit¹. The Lord showed enough courtesy and respect to all those invited to make them happy and feel favourable towards him. (3)

The alms seekers received enough charities to make them contented, while the friends of Lord Ram were shown enough affection and loving gestures that made them happy too². (4)

[Note—¹Giving charities and alms at the time of departure for a long journey away from home is a traditional system whereby the traveller receives blessings for a happy life and success abroad. Since there was no time to make elaborate arrangements for such auspicious events, Lord Ram made a token charity and assigned the largesse in favour of his guru, sage Vasistha, giving him the authority to dispense it as he deems fit.

The word “baraṣāsana” means sustenance for a year; so the Lord assigned enough money and food grains from the royal treasury and warehouses that would

take care of the needy for a whole year. Of course, this largesse would be welcomed by those who received it, and they blessed the Lord.

²It seems a paradoxical situation though. On the one hand there was an overwhelming sense of grief and sadness amongst the citizens at Lord Ram's departure, and on the other hand we read here that there were people who came forward to receive charities and felt contented and happy by getting what they needed. This brings to the fore the naked truth of this gross material world—that material gains seem to act as a soothing gel that would oftentimes make a person forget the pain of separation from those whom he or she loved so much, and for whom they were so much grieving a while ago.

For instance, when a father dies, his sons would feel sad for a while but soon forget him after acquiring his property, and rarely would there be a son who would say he doesn't want anything but his late father's blessings and a sweet memory of how his father loved him when alive, pledging to take his late father's name and legacy forward as best as he can!]

दासीं दास बोलाइ बहोरी । गुरहि सौंपि बोले कर जोरी ॥ ५ ॥

सब कै सार सँभार गोसाईं । करबि जनक जननी की नाई ॥ ६ ॥

dāsīm dāsa bōlā'i bahōrī. gurahi saumpi bōlē kara jōrī. 5.

saba kai sāra sam̐bhāra gōsā'īm. karabi janaka janānī kī nā'īm. 6.

Then Lord Ram summoned the male servants and maids who served him (and his wife as well as Laxman), and handed their charge to his guru (sage Vasistha), telling him, with the palms of his hands joined in a prayerful gesture, as follows --- (5)

'My revered Lord (gōsā'īm)! Please take care of them and their welfare. Look after them like you were their parents¹.' (6)

[Note—¹What was the need for Lord Ram to hand over the custody of the male and female servants who served him, Sita and Laxman to sage Vasistha? Well, there was the fear that during the period of the Lord's long absence from Ayodhya, they would be neglected and made to suffer, if not by anyone else than may be by Kaikeyi herself, for she would turn her wrath upon them after the Lord departs.]

बारहिं बार जोरि जुग पानी । कहत रामु सब सन मृदु बानी ॥ ७ ॥

सोइ सब भाँति मोर हितकारी । जेहि तें रहै भुआल सुखारी ॥ ८ ॥

bārahīm bāra jōri juga pānī. kahata rāmu saba sana mṛdu bānī. 7.

sō'i saba bhām̐ti mōra hitakārī. jēhi tēm rahai bhu'āla sukhārī. 8.

Then, Lord Ram folded his hands and repeatedly requested all those who were present there, most politely and with sweet words, saying --- (7)

‘It will be deemed to be most beneficial for me and serve me and my cause well if the king (Dasrath) lives happily and does not suffer in any way (during my absence).

[To wit, I earnestly request all of you to please collectively look after king Dasrath, my father, and see to it that he is always happy and does not grieve for me.]’
(8)

दो०. मातु सकल मोरे बिरहँ जेहिं न होहिं दुख दीन ।

सोइ उपाउ तुम्ह करेहु सब पुर जन परम प्रबीन ॥ ८० ॥

dōhā.

mātu sakala mōrē biraham̐ jēhim na hōhim dukha dīna.

sō'i upā'u tumha karēhu saba pura jana parama prabīna. 80.

Lord Ram continued: ‘Further, let it be so that all the mothers do not suffer in grief due to separation from me.

Oh my dear citizens who are wise and intelligent in every way—please do whatever is necessary to ensure that my father and my mothers do not suffer in any way whatsoever during my absence.¹’ (Doha no. 80)

[Note—¹Lord Ram made this appeal so that after he has left, there would be no revolt in the kingdom against Dasrath and Kaikeyi. Further, senior members of the society would keep in touch with his old father and saddened mothers, giving them company and providing moral support and emotional comfort whenever they felt overwhelmed with sorrows.]

चौ०. एहि बिधि राम सबहि समुझावा । गुर पद पदुम हरषि सिरु नावा ॥ १ ॥

गनपति गौरि गिरीसु मनाई । चले असीस पाइ रघुराई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

ēhi bidhi rāma sabahi samujhāvā. gura pada paduma haraṣi siru nāvā. 1.

ganapati gauri girīsu manāī. calē asīsa pā'i raghurāī. 2.

In the aforesaid manner, Lord Ram advised everyone what the Lord thought was fit and proper on the occasion¹. Then, he bowed his head cheerfully at the lotus-like feet of his guru (sage Vasistha). (1)

After this, Lord Ram invoked the blessings of Lord Ganpati (i.e. Lord Ganesh), Goddess Gauri (i.e. Goddess Parvati, the consort of Lord Shiva and the Cosmic Mother-Goddess) as well as Lord Girish (i.e. Lord Shiva)², bowed his head reverentially before them and symbolically received their grace, and then started on his onward journey (to the forest). (2)

[Note—¹This is a follow up of Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 80 herein above.

²These three deities are worshipped and offered obeisance at the start of any endeavour or journey in order to seek their blessings and grace for its successful completion. It ought to be noted here that Tulsidas has himself invoked them in the very beginning of the present book 'Ram Charit Manas', in the book's opening lines themselves—apropos: Baal Kand, Sholka line nos. 1-3 at the very beginning of the book.]

राम चलत अति भयउ बिषादू । सुनि न जाइ पुर आरत नादू ॥ ३ ॥
कुसगुन लंक अवध अति सोकू । हरष बिषाद बिबस सुरलोकू ॥ ४ ॥

rāma calata ati bhaya'u biṣādū. suni na jā'i pura ārata nādū. 3.
kusaguna laṅka avadha ati sōkū. haraṣa biṣāda bibasa suralōkū. 4.

No sooner Lord Ram departed from there (i.e. Ayodhya) but a pall of gloom, grief, distress and despondency spread everywhere, and the pitiful sound of lamentations and wailings of the citizens was so intense and painful to hear, and so heart wrenching, that it cannot be described in words. (3)

While there was extreme sadness and profound grief all over Ayodhya, there was, on the other hand and at the same time, appearance of bad omens in Lanka¹.

Meanwhile, the gods, who live in the heaven, underwent a paradoxical roller coaster of emotions, a situation that, on the one hand, made them feel joyous and exhilarated at the Lord's departure for the forest (as it meant that the Lord was going on a mission to eliminate the scourge of the demons who had been causing immense torments to the gods and their subjects in this creation), but on the other hand it moved them all with pity and pain too (when they saw how the helpless citizens of Ayodhya wept and wailed for their beloved Lord, as well as the thought of the immense physical sufferings that the Lord would have to endure in the wilderness—all for their sake). (4)

[Note—¹There were bad omens and signs of doom appearing in Lanka almost at the same time as Lord Ram's departure from Ayodhya. The reason is obvious—for the Lord was going to eventually eliminate the demons one by one, first during his journey through the forest, and finally in a ferocious war fought in their very den itself, in the island of Lanka, where their king Ravana would be killed, along with his son Meghanad, his brother Kumbhakaran, and all the commanders and soldiers of the demon army who had been causing profound sufferings to the innocent creatures of the Lord's creation.]

गइ मुरुछा तब भूपति जागे । बोलि सुमंत्रु कहन अस लागे ॥ ५ ॥
रामु चले बन प्रान न जाहीं । केहि सुख लागि रहत तन माहीं ॥ ६ ॥

ga'i muruchā taba bhūpati jāgē. bōli sumantru kahana asa lāgē. 5.
rāmu calē bana prāna na jāhīṁ. kēhi sukha lāgi rahata tana māhīṁ. 6.

By and by, the king regained his consciousness, and calling Sumantra (his chief minister) near, he said to the latter as follows --- (5)

‘Lord Ram has departed for the forest, but how unfortunate and paradoxical it is that my Pran (i.e. the life forces present in the body that keep a person alive) has not departed as yet. I don’t know for what kind of pleasure or comfort or happiness the Pran wishes to still abide inside my body¹. (6)

[Note—¹Dasrath has repeatedly asserted that he cannot live or survive in the absence of Lord Ram—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 33; (ii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 34.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 79.

So, he was surprised as well as ashamed at himself that even though Lord Ram has moved out to the forest, he (Dasrath) is still alive.]

एहि तें कवन व्यथा बलवाना । जो दुखु पाइ तजहिं तनु प्राना ॥ ७ ॥

पुनि धरि धीर कहइ नरनाहू । लै रथु संग सखा तुम्ह जाहू ॥ ८ ॥

ēhi tēm kavana byathā balavānā. jō dukhu pā'i tajahim tanu prānā. 7.
puni dhari dhīra kaha'i naranāhū. lai rathu saṅga sakhā tumha jāhū. 8.

Say, what pain and grief would be more severe, more intense, more pinching, more heart-wrenching and agonizing than this (i.e. separation from Lord Ram) as to make my Pran leave my body (and let me lie in peace).’ (7)

The king sighed and paused for a while to recover himself and gather enough courage and patience to speak again. He instructed Sumantra, telling him: ‘My dear friend (sakhā), you should take a chariot¹ and accompany him (Lord Ram) on his journey. (8)

[Note—¹King Dasrath’s instructions were clear—Sumantra was to go to Lord Ram with the chariot ‘himself’, and not depute someone else instead. Dasrath addresses Sumantra as a ‘friend’ because Sumantra was very close to the king and his confidante. All the family members respected him, and he was treated by Lord Ram with the same respect the Lord gave to his own father, Dasrath. Further, Sumantra was exceptionally wise, intelligent and sagacious; he was adroit and knew how to tackle sticky situations calmly and diplomatically. Dasrath did not trust anyone else like he trusted Sumantra.

So, by sending Sumantra on the mission, Dasrath had used the best option that was left to him in the present scenario to try and change Lord Ram’s determination and bring him home.]

दो०. सुठि सुकुमार कुमार दोउ जनकसुता सुकुमारि ।

रथ चढ़ाइ देखराइ बनु फिरेहु गएँ दिन चारि ॥ ८१ ॥

dōhā.

suṭhi sukumāra kumāra dō'u janakasutā sukumāri.
ratha caṛhā'i dēkharā'i banu phirēhu ga'ēm̐ dina cāri. 81.

Dasrath gave his brief to Sumantra and advised him as follows: 'The two young boys (i.e. Lord Ram and Laxman—"kumāra dō'u") are of tender bodies and they are unaccustomed to enduring hardships, and so is also the case with the daughter of king Janak (i.e. Sita; "janakasutā").

So, you should make them aboard the chariot, go for some distance into the forest and move around there for some days, say for instance about four days, and then turn back to come home.' (Doha no. 81)

चौ०. जौं नहिं फिरहिं धीर दोउ भाई । सत्यसंध दृढ़व्रत रघुराई ॥ १ ॥
तौ तुम्ह बिनय करेहु कर जोरी । फेरिअ प्रभु मिथिलेसकिसोरी ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

jauṁ nahim phirahim dhīra dō'u bhā'ī. satyasandha dṛḥabrata raghurā'ī. 1.
tau tumha binaya karēhu kara jōrī. phēri'a prabhu mithilēsakisōrī. 2.

[But Dasrath was in doubt if Lord Ram and Laxman would return, so he advised Sumantra further—]

'In case the two brothers (Lord Ram and Laxman) refuse to come back, because Lord Ram is of a very determined nature, and he would never go back on a decision that he has already taken, --- (1)

--- In that eventuality, please hold the palms of your hand together in a prayerful mode and humbly plead with the Lord ("prabhu"; i.e. Lord Ram) that at least he should send back Sita ("mithilēsakisōrī"—the daughter of the king of Mithila, i.e. king Janak). (2)

जब सिय कानन देखि डेराई । कहेहु मोरि सिख अवसरु पाई ॥ ३ ॥
सासु ससुर अस कहेउ सँदेसू । पुत्रि फिरिअ बन बहुत कलेसू ॥ ४ ॥
पितुगृह कबहुँ कबहुँ ससुरारी । रहेहु जहाँ रुचि होइ तुम्हारी ॥ ५ ॥

jaba siya kānana dēkhi ḍērā'ī. kahēhu mōri sikha avasaru pā'ī. 3.
sāsu sasura asa kahē'u saṁdēsū. putri phiri'a bana bahuta kalēsū. 4.
pitugṛha kabahum̐ kabahum̐ sasurārī. rahēhu jahām̐ ruci hō'i tumhārī. 5.

'When Sita feels scared by the sights and sounds of the forest, then on such occasions give her my advice. (3)

Tell her, "Your mother and father in-laws have sent this message for you: Daughter, please return back for there are lots of troubles and severe hardships in the forest¹. (4)

She could stay anywhere she likes; for sometimes she could live at her father's place (in Janakpur) and at other times at her in-law's place in accordance with her wishes, convenience and pleasure. (5)

[Note—¹Dasrath asks Sumantra to remind Sita of the different horrors of the forest about which she has already been briefed by Lord Ram in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 62—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 63.

Besides the Lord, even king Dasrath himself as well as the many senior ladies who had gathered around Sita at the time Lord Ram was taking his final leave of his father, had also tried to point out the numerous difficulties of the forest in their attempt to dissuade her from proceeding to the wilds—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 78.

But Sita was so determined to accompany Lord Ram that she had not paid any heed to these advices at that time. So now Dasrath feels that after experiencing the frightening sights of the forest first-hand, it was quite possible that Sita may be amenable and responsive to suggestions that forest is not suitable for her, and that she ought to return home.]

एहि बिधि करेहु उपाय कदंबा । फिरइ त होइ प्रान अवलंबा ॥ ६ ॥
नाहिं त मोर मरनु परिनामा । कछु न बसाइ भएँ बिधि बामा ॥ ७ ॥
अस कहि मुरुछि परा महि राऊ । रामु लखनु सिय आनि देखारू ॥ ८ ॥

ēhi bidhi karēhu upāya kadambā. phira'i ta hō'i prāna avalambā. 6.
nāhim ta mōra maranu parināmā. kachu na basā'i bha'ēm' bidhi bāmā. 7.
asa kahi muruchi parā mahi rā'ū. rāmu lakhanu siya āni dēkhā'ū. 8.

In this way, please try as many means you can think of, try any number of devices you can devise to somehow bring at least Sita back home, for if she returns it would give me some hope, solace and succour to help me survive (during the period of fourteen years that my dear son, Lord Ram, would remain away from me) and cope with this ordeal of separation from the Lord (because in my daughter-in-law I shall see an image of my son, Lord Ram). (6)

Otherwise, verily indeed, the consequences would be my death. [Forsooth, if Sita too refuses to come back, I will surely die as a result.]

Say, what can be done when the Creator has become opposed to a person, as no one can stand against the writ of an antagonized Creator.' (7)

Saying, 'Bring Lord Ram and Laxman here, and make me see them once again', the despondent and distraught king fainted and collapsed unconscious as if frozen by grief, shock and agony. (8)

दो०. पाइ रजायसु नाइ सिरु रथु अति बेग बनाइ ।
गयउ जहाँ बाहेर नगर सीय सहित दोउ भाइ ॥ ८२ ॥

dōhā.

pā'i rajāyasu nā'i siru rathu ati bēga banā'i.
gaya'u jahām' bāhēra nagara sīya sahita dō'u bhā'i. 82.

Meanwhile, after receiving his orders from the king, Sumantra bowed his head in compliance, took his leave, and went in all haste to prepare the chariot to pursue Lord Ram as instructed by Dasrath.

Sumantra took the chariot and reached the place just on the outskirts of the city where the two brothers were present at the time along with Sita¹. (Doha no. 82)

[Note—¹Lord Ram was moving on foot, but he was moving as swiftly as he could. By the time Sumantra caught up with him, Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman had reached the outskirts of the city of Ayodhya.

If we closely look at the developments and analyse the present situation minutely, we would discover that at the time king Dasrath told his chief minister Sumantra to take the chariot and go behind Lord Ram and make serious attempts to see if the Lord himself, or at least his wife Sita, comes back home—there is no mention of Kaikeyi either throwing tantrums and jumping mad at this request of the king, or stopping Sumantra from carrying out the king's orders. What does this imply? Simple: Kaikeyi was not there.

Where was she; why was she not there? Well, no sooner had Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman left Dasrath to move out of the palace on their way out of the city, but Kaikeyi rushed to the terrace or some strategic-located balcony of the palace, from where a panoramic view of the city was visible, to see and make sure that the Lord and his two companions have actually moved out of the gates of the palace and are headed out of the city attired as hermits, or they have tried some trick on her and hid themselves somewhere in some part of the compound of the vast palace grounds, or in the house of some minister or courtier to evade Kaikeyi's eyes and bid their time for inciting a revolt amongst the citizens and make a forcible comeback.

Manthara, her trusted maid, may have surely lurked behind some curtain of the room where all this drama unfolded, and as soon as Lord Ram and his wife and brother left the room, she gestured to Kaikeyi to follow her to the terrace or the balcony referred to herein above to monitor the Lord's physical departure.

Now, from their vantage point they surely must have seen Sumantra leaving the palace gates on his chariot, but, one, they had no way to guess what his mission was, and second, even if they could make a right guess that the chariot was being sent to bring Lord Ram and his two companions home, but by that time it was too late for the wicked queen and her equally wicked instigator, Manthara, to stop the chief minister.

Another important obvious deduction that we can make at this point is that as soon as Kaikeyi left the room, the other queens of Dasrath, viz. Kaushalya and Sumitra, came in, accompanied by all other senior members of the household. At that time, Dasrath was unconscious and lying either on the ground or on his bed (Chaupai line no. 8 herein above). So, those who came in immediately made arrangements to give proper medical aid and other types of comfort and moral support to the traumatized king in order to revive him. Thereafter, some time passed before Sumantra returned to inform that the Lord had not come back but went on with his journey into the forest.

In the meanwhile, the king was very sick, desolate and despondent, lying virtually on his death-bed; he was surrounded by the queens, obviously except Kaikeyi, and royal attendants, who were all grieving and feeling equally desolate and

despondent like the king. All were waiting for Sumantra's return; the miserable king was counting his hours and days and waiting for the moment when either he would see his dear son Lord Ram standing before his eyes, or embrace death.

According to Veda Vyas' "Adhyatma Ramayan", Ayodhya Kand, Canto 5, verse nos. 48-50, that king Dasrath had asked his attendants to take him to the palace of Lord Ram's mother, i.e. queen Kaushalya, and no sooner he reached there than he swooned once again and fell down sick and unconscious.]

चौ०. तब सुमंत्र नृप बचन सुनाए । करि बिनती रथ रामु चढ़ाए ॥ १ ॥

चढ़ि रथ सीय सहित दोउ भाई । चले हृदयँ अवधहि सिरु नाई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

taba sumantra nrpa bacana sunā'ē. kari binatī ratha rāmu caṛhā'ē. 1.
caḍhi ratha sīya sahita dō'u bhā'ī. calē hṛdayam' avadhahi siru nā'ī. 2.

When Sumantra reached Lord Ram, he conveyed the king's message to the Lord, prayed to the Lord and made him board the chariot. (1)

The two brothers (Lord Ram and Laxman) boarded the chariot along with Sita¹, bowed their heads at the city of Ayodhya, and departed for their onwards journey (to the forest)*.

[*This verse can be read as follows also: "Sita, along with the two brothers, boarded the chariot; then they bowed their heads at the city of Ayodhya, and departed from there for their onwards journey."] (2)

[Note—¹In Veda Vyas' "Adhyatma Ramayan", Ayodhya Kand, Canto 5, verse nos. 43-45 we learn that Sita had boarded the chariot first, she was followed by Lord Ram, and then Laxman stepped on board last. This sequence is hinted at by our present narrator, i.e. Goswami Tulsidas, by naming Sita first, and then saying that she was accompanied by the two brothers.

Again, if we closely analyse this verse and the sequence of the three, i.e. Sita, Lord Ram and then Laxman boarding the chariot in this order, we would draw some interesting conclusions. Perhaps Lord Ram was in a dilemma and was uncertain whether it would be right for him to continue walking on foot, or board the chariot sent by his father. Sita observed the quandary in which her husband found himself, and she decided to show by example by boarding the chariot first, implying that the Lord and his brother Laxman shouldn't hesitate in doing so.

One of the reasons why Sita made this wise decision on the spot was that they, i.e. Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman, were surrounded by a huge crowd of citizens that followed them out of the city as is evident from the verses that follow herein below. It was also quite certain that the citizens wouldn't let them go; the citizens would follow their beloved Lord Ram wherever he went. So therefore, some way had to be found to evade the citizens and move out quickly. Just at this juncture Sumantra arrived with the chariot, as if this chance was god-sent.

Hence, Sita made a snap decision to shrug off the crowd of wailing and grieving citizens that followed Lord Ram by boarding the chariot and moving ahead with speed to leave the crowd behind.

This event shows the role a good and wise wife plays in the life of a man: when the man is uncertain on any issue, it is the responsibility of a wife to act swiftly and show her confused husband the correct way ahead.

Besides this, Sita wished to show how bold, courageous and determined she was. While her husband was still undecided whether or not to get up the chariot, she took the initiative and boarded it first—to tell everyone that she is not afraid to go to the forest at all. It was her reply to Lord Ram too, who had tried to dissuade her from following him to the forest by pointing out so many troubles and horrors of the forest that Sita was sure to encounter there—that she isn't afraid of the forest at all, that she is very bold and determined to go there, even if it meant going there ahead of the Lord himself, should he demur.

But, what happened then? We shall read in the verses that follow herein below that the crowd of citizens did not yield; they milled around the chariot in a tight circle that slowed down its progress as they pursued it from all sides. The compassionate, merciful, kind, benevolent and loving Lord Ram must have felt deep pangs of pain down in his heart, even as his eyes must have become wet with tears, with the thought that while he is riding on a chariot in comfort, his distraught and wailing citizens, who loved him so much so that they had decided to abandon all comforts and follow the Lord to the forest, running behind him on foot!]

चलत रामु लखि अवध अनाथा । बिकल लोग सब लागे साथे ॥ ३ ॥

कृपासिंधु बहुबिधि समुझावहिं । फिरहिं प्रेम बस पुनि फिरि आवहिं ॥ ४ ॥

calata rāmu lakhi avadha anāthā. bikala lōga saba lāgē sāthā. 3.
kṛpāsindhu bahubidhi samujhāvahim. phirahim prēma basa puni phiri āvahim.
4.

When the dismayed, distraught and despondent citizens saw that Lord Ram has left the city, they realized that it has become desolate, almost like an abandoned and ghostly city. The citizens themselves felt as if they have been orphaned and abandoned, making them excessively agitated and remorseful.

So therefore, unable to bear separation from Lord Ram, the people accompanied the Lord and followed him¹. (3)

Lord Ram, who is an ocean of mercy, kindness, compassion and grace, tried his best to advice the people and explain the situation to them in an attempt to convince them not to follow him.

The people would turn back for a while, but come back again soon to follow the Lord (as the grief of separation from their beloved Lord outweighed all other considerations for them, and it was too much for them to bear it). (4)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Veda Vyas' "Adhyatma Ramayan", Ayodhya Kand, Canto 5, verse no. 47.]

लागति अवध भयावनि भारी । मानहुँ कालराति अँधिआरी ॥ ५ ॥

घोर जंतु सम पुर नर नारी । डरपहिं एकहि एक निहारी ॥ ६ ॥

lāgati avadha bhayāvani bhārī. mānahum' kālarāti am'dhi'ārī. 5.
ghōra jantu sama pura nara nārī. ḍarapahim' ēkahi ēka nihārī. 6.

At that time, Ayodhya appeared very terrifying and desolate place to behold as if the night of doomsday had descended upon the city (that was a while ago a very colourful, lively, vibrant, thriving and prosperous city). (5)

The inhabitants of the city, both the males and the females, appeared to be like horrifying and ghostly creatures who felt scared when seeing each other. (6)

घर मसान परिजन जनु भूता । सुत हित मीत मनहुँ जमदूता ॥ ७ ॥
बागन्ह बिटप बेलि कुम्हिलाहीं । सरित सरोवर देखि न जाहीं ॥ ८ ॥

ghara masāna parijana janu bhūtā. suta hita mīta manahum' jamadūtā. 7.
bāganha biṭapa bēli kumhilāhīm. sarita sarōvara dēkhi na jāhīm. 8.

The homes of the city resembled cremation grounds, and its residents were like the ghosts and phantoms that roam on such grounds so much so that even dear ones, all kith and kin, seemed to be messengers of Death God known as Yamraj¹. (7)

In the gardens, the trees and creepers dried up and shriveled. The rivers and the ponds looked no less foreboding; their sight was so gloomy that one cannot describe how bad they appeared when looked at. (8)

[Note—¹Almost everyone in the city of Ayodhya who could follow Lord Ram abandoned the city and ran behind him—apropos: Doha no. 84 herein below.

The general impression that one got of Ayodhya during those moments was that of a city ravaged by war and plundered by an army of Misfortunes, when all its inhabitants flee from it.]

दो०. हय गय कोटिन्ह केलिमृग पुरपसु चातक मोर ।
पिक रथांग सुक सारिका सारस हंस चकोर ॥ ८३ ॥

dōhā.

haya gaya kōṭinha kēlimṛga purapasu cātaka mōra.
pika rathāṅga suka sārīkā sārasa hansa cakōra. 83.

Not only the human population, but even the animals and birds, such as the countless horses, elephants, animals of game (wild animals), domesticated animals (cows, buffaloes, bullocks, goats, hens et al), Chataks (sparrow hawks), peacocks, cuckoos, Chakvas (ruddy goose), parrots, Mainas or Sarikas (black birds known for its melodious voice), Saras (cranes), Hansa (swans) and Chakors (Indian red-legged partridges)—all were sad and desperate with grief when Lord Ram left the city. (Doha no. 83)

चौ०. राम बियोग बिकल सब ठाढ़े । जहँ तहँ मनहुँ चित्र लिखि काढ़े ॥ १ ॥
 नगरु सफल बनु गहबर भारी । खग मृग बिपुल सकल नर नारी ॥ २ ॥
 बिधि कैकई किरातिनि कीन्ही । जेहिं दव दुसह दसहुँ दिसि दीन्ही ॥ ३ ॥
 caupāī.

rāma biyōga bikala saba ṭhārḥē. jaham̃ taham̃ manahum̃ citra likhi kārḥē. 1.
 nagaru saphala banu gahabara bhārī. khaga mrga bipula sakala nara nārī. 2.
 bidhi kaikaī kirātini kīnhī. jēhim̃ dava dusaha dasahum̃ disi dīnhī. 3.

Everyone in the city stood dazed and transfixed by an overwhelming sense grief and sadness that overtook them all; they stood staring and motionless as if their image was depicted in a painting (in which no character shows any movement). (1)

[In verse nos. 2-3, a fine imagery is used to describe the sad picture of Ayodhya of that time.]

The city of Ayodhya was like a dense forest with trees laden with fruits (symbolizing a prosperous, thriving, vibrant and pleasant city), and the countless birds and animals of different kinds of both sexes, the males and the females, that lived in this forest represented the cheerful male and female citizens of the city. (2)

In this lush green, pleasant and charming forest, the over-jealous Creator (bidhi) created mischief by implanting or appointing Kaikeyi as a hunter woman (kaikaī kirātini kīnhī) who would (in her wickedness) start a wild fire (by sending Lord Ram to the wilds) that would eventually engulf the entire forest (city), resulting in not only scaring its animals and birds (citizens) and forcing them to abandon it and flee, but also to reduce the forest (the city of Ayodhya) into a desolate place ruined by this fire (of grief and dismay at separation from Lord Ram)¹. (3)

[Note—¹In this metaphor, Ayodhya is the ‘lush green forest with fruit trees’; the citizens are the ‘animals and birds’ that thrive and live happily in the forest; Kaikeyi is the cruel ‘hunter woman’ who enjoys tormenting and killing animals; and the ‘wild fire’ symbolizes her sending Lord Ram to the forest that caused unimaginable misery and grief in Ayodhya and make its people suffer from it.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 28; (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 29; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 6 that precedes Doha no. 46—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 47; (iv) Chaupai line nos. 3-7 that precede Doha no. 51.]

सहि न सके रघुबर बिरहागी । चले लोग सब ब्याकुल भागी ॥ ४ ॥
 सबहिं बिचारु कीन्ह मन माहीं । राम लखन सिय बिनु सुखु नाहीं ॥ ५ ॥
 जहाँ रामु तहँ सबुड़ समाजू । बिनु रघुबीर अवध नहिं काजू ॥ ६ ॥

sahi na sakē raghubara birahāgī. calē lōga saba byākula bhāgī. 4.
 sabahim̃ bicāru kīnha mana māhīm̃. rāma lakhana siya binu sukhu nāhīm̃. 5.

jahām' rāmu taham' sabu'i samājū. binu raghubīra avadha nahim kājū. 6.

Extremely distressed and unable to cope with the severity of the pain, the unbearable agony, and the intensity of grief that accompanied separation from Lord Ram (who was loved by each and every citizen of Ayodhya), all the people became so extremely agitated and perplexed that they ran after the Lord and followed him on his way out of the city¹. (4)

Everyone decided and was convinced in his mind and heart (Mana) that there is no comfort and peace, and neither is there any joy and happiness in life, without Lord Ram and Laxman². (5)

[The people decided that—] Wherever Lord Ram would stay, the entire community would live there with him, for without the Lord, Ayodhya had no use and attraction for anybody³. (6)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 83 herein above.

²Indeed, Lord Ram was like an ocean of bliss, beatitude, felicity, happiness and joy—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 197.

As for Laxman, he was the support of everything in existence, and without him the life of the citizens would be like a boat that rocks wildly and gets lost in a stormy sea—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 197.

³Sumitra, the mother of Laxman, had given a similar advice to her son in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 74.]

चले साथ अस मंत्रु दृढ़ाई । सुर दुर्लभ सुख सदन बिहाई ॥ ७ ॥

राम चरन पंकज प्रिय जिन्हही । बिषय भोग बस करहिं कि तिन्हही ॥ ८ ॥

calē sātha asa mantru dr̥ḥā'ī. sura durlabha sukha sadana bihā'ī. 7.
rāma carana paṅkaja priya jinhahī. biṣaya bhōga basa karahim ki tinhahī. 8.

With this firm conviction and unwavering determination (as stated in verse nos. 5-6 herein above), the citizens accompanied Lord Ram, abandoning their pleasant homes that had all the facilities for physical comfort and happiness which were even difficult for the gods to access easily¹. (7)

Indeed, in all sooth and without gainsay, is it ever possible that for a person who has affection and devotion for the holy lotus-like feet of Lord Ram, the charms of this gross material world would present any attraction? [No, they can't.]² (8)

[Note—¹Ayodhya was a very prosperous, wealthy, colourful and vibrant city. It rivaled the charms of heaven, and even Brahma, the creator, would be fascinated when he looked at its beauty with wonder, unable to understand who had created this magnificent place as it seemed to him that it was beyond his ability to create such a

beautiful city. {Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 195; (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 296—to Doha no. 297; (iii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 344—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 345; (b) Uttar Kand, (iv) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 11; (v) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 27—to Doha no. 29.}

²All the temptations of the world, no matter how great, how profound, how inviting, how attractive they might be, would never ever be able to lure a true devotee of Lord Ram—because he regards all such charms, attractions, comforts and pleasures afforded by this material world as being false and temporary, just like a mirage seen in a desert. He treats the gross world and its material charms as being inconsequential when compared to the eternal bliss, beatitude, felicity, contentedness, joy and happiness that one gets by having devotion and affection for Lord Ram.]

दो०. बालक बृद्ध बिहाइ गृहँ लगे लोग सब साथ ।
तमसा तीर निवासु किय प्रथम दिवस रघुनाथ ॥ ८४ ॥

dōhā.

bālaka bṛd'dha bihā'i gr̥ham' lagē lōga saba sātha.
tamasā tīra nivāsu kiya prathama divasa raghunātha. 84.

Every single individual of Ayodhya, including the children and the old people, abandoned their homes and joined Lord Ram (on his way out of the city, en-route to the forest).

On the first day (of his forest exile)¹, Lord Ram (“raghunātha”; the Lord of the Raghus) made a halt on the banks of river Tamsa². (Doha no. 84)

[Note—¹The phrase “on the first day” (prathama divasa) indicates that the counting of the period of fourteen years of the Lord’s forest exile started from the day he left the city of Ayodhya and halted on the banks of river Tamsa in the evening.

Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman were on the chariot sent by Dasrath and driven by Sumantra, while the distressed and grieving citizens followed them on foot. It was a huge crowd that thronged the chariot from all sides so that the vehicle moved at a slow pace. There was nothing to eat either on the way or where they halted on the banks of the river, so everyone, including Lord Ram and his two companions, just drank water to quench their thirst. This was duly reported by Sumantra to Dasrath* when the former came back to report to the king about what had happened after he was ordered by the latter to take a chariot and follow Lord Ram.

*{Refer: (a) Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 150; (b) Veda Vyas’ “Adhyatma Ramayan”, Ayodhya Kand, Canto 5, verse no. 51.}

All the citizens who had followed Lord Ram from Ayodhya also halted at the same spot alongside the Lord. They were determined that they would accompany Lord Ram to the forest. This is clearly mentioned in “Adhyatma Ramayan”, Ayodhya Kand, Canto 5, verse no. 53.

So, in all probability, the citizens lay down for the night forming a large circle around the Lord. The chariot and its horses were stationed at a little distance away from where the people and the Lord lay on the ground. This will be evident when we read in the following verses that at the dead of night the Lord boarded the chariot

along with Sita and Laxman, and asked Sumantra to swiftly ride away from there, so that the Lord could move out of the reach of the grief-stricken and distraught people when they woke up in the morning the next day, for the Lord did not wish to cause unwarranted hardships and sufferings to his beloved subjects for no fault of theirs, as would have happened if the citizens were allowed to follow the Lord further on.

The Lord could not avoid this hard decision, which must have truly pained him no less than the pain it caused to the dismayed citizens when they discovered the next morning that the Lord was gone, for it was necessary for him to move on to the forest alone in order to fulfill his obligations.

²The “Tamsa” river is a minor, shallow and seasonal river that often dries up during the hot summer months, while during the rainy season it overflows the surrounding land and spreads to a width of roughly half a mile. It lies to the south of Ayodhya, roughly 12 miles or 6 Kosas from the city. The present name of the place is ‘Gaura Ghat’. There are many small ponds, lakes and other water bodies in the surrounding area, one of which is known as ‘Varan’; it is believed that in ancient times royal elephants of the king’s army used to live here.

About 4 miles east of ‘Bharat Kunda’, which is a small place with a pond named after Bharat, the younger brother of Lord Ram who lived here like a hermit throughout the period that Lord Ram was in the forest, is a small village called ‘Tardiha’ where there is a spot called ‘Ram Chaura’ on the bank of river Tamsa; it is believed that Lord Ram halted at this place on his first day out of Ayodhya.

Besides this, there is another village called ‘Chakia’ that lies on the banks of river Tamsa about 1 mile away on the road that goes from Bharat Kund to the city of Prayag or Triveni (a city whose modern day name is Allahabad). In this village there is a stone marked by the footprints of Lord Ram on the bank of river Tamsa. Perhaps the Lord washed and drank water here to refresh himself, and then sat down for a while on this stone to rest.

According to the oral local tradition of this place, all the people who followed Lord Ram from Ayodhya had stayed here during the night. It was not a small crowd of course, for the city of Ayodhya was a thriving and a populous one, and almost all its inhabitants had followed Lord Ram. So therefore, there surely must have been hundreds and thousands of people in Lord Ram’s company, and this huge multitude of people must have lied down for the night around the banks of river Tamsa in an area spreading over approximately 3-4 square miles by a rough guess.

It also means that on the first day, Lord Ram had traveled around twelve or so miles out of Ayodhya, in the southern direction.]

चौ०. रघुपति प्रजा प्रेमबस देखी । सदय हृदयँ दुखु भयउ बिसेषी ॥ १ ॥

करुनामय रघुनाथ गोसाँई । बेगि पाइअहिं पीर पराई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

raghupati prajā prēmabasa dēkhī. sadaya hṛdayam̐ dukhu bhaya'u bisēṣī. 1.
karunāmaya raghunātha gōsāmī. bēgi pā'lahim̐ pīra parā'ī. 2.

When Lord Ram, who by nature had a very compassionate, kind and merciful heart, observed that his subjects were so overwhelmed with love and affection for him that

they would never leave him at any cost, the Lord felt very sad and distressed in his heart.¹ (1)

This is because Lord Ram (“raghunātha”; the Lord of the family of illustrious kings descending from the ancient king Raghu) was an embodiment of mercy, compassion and kindness, and he readily realizes the pain of others and empathizes with them.

[To wit, Lord Ram easily understood the intensity of pain and the unbearable grief of separation from him that had overwhelmed the heart of the people of Ayodhya, and the Lord was mightily moved by this himself. He was full of sympathy for his subjects because they had to suffer on his account; the Lord empathized with the pain and the hurt that the people felt in their hearts because of their love for him—because the Lord had a very sensitive nature who would quickly feel himself the pain of others.] (2)

[Note—¹Lord Ram was in a quandary. On the one hand there were his loving subjects who were totally devoted and loyal to him, who had abandoned their comfortable homes and conveniences of a city life, and had chosen instead, with a willingness, to endure a life of hardships in the forest, but not live in Ayodhya without their beloved Lord amidst them. On the other hand, the Lord did not want them to suffer on his account; the Lord knew that life in the forest was very harsh and troublesome, and since children, old people, women and men had all followed him out of the city, determined as they were that they won’t live without him, it was unwise for the Lord to let them follow him any further.

He was in a dilemma: for one, he would have to turn himself into a stone-hearted person in order to shake-off such loving souls who were ready to sacrifice everything for his sake, and on the other side, taking them along to the forest meant uncountable numbers of sufferings these people would have to endure simply because they loved the Lord beyond one’s imagination.

Lord Ram became pensive and remorseful for quite some time. He pondered over the matter and weighed the pros and the cons. He had to take some hard and tough decisions at this point of time, decisions that virtually tore his merciful heart apart. Lord Ram somehow suppressed his tears, bit his lips, gulped despondently, and with a heavy heart and a sad mind full of remorse and grief decided that it is in the long-term interests of the people of Ayodhya that they return home for the moment and wait there for his return from the forest.

Another reason why the Lord was reluctant to take hundreds and thousands of helpless citizens out into the wilds, unprotected and un-provided for, without any logistical support to take care of their needs for food, clothing, medicines, shelter etc., would be a horrible and unpardonable mistake on his part to commit as it was his moral duty and responsibility to ensure that his subjects do not suffer in any way.

Further, Lord Ram’s mandate was to live like a hermit according to what Kaikeyi had extracted from Dasrath, as well as to eliminate the ferocious demons who infested the forest, according to the promise the Lord had made to the gods, sages and mother earth earlier; these demons killed humans at will. It was surely a grave and precarious situation: carrying along a huge crowd of unarmed citizens, who would not only be hungry and thirsty but also weary and tired of long travel on foot through the intractable forest path, would be an incredulous thing for anyone to even think of and imagine, what to speak of actually letting it happen. How will the Lord take care of them in the wilderness of the forest when he himself would be living like a hermit—it was a big question nagging at the Lord’s mind during those crucial moments when he

had to quickly decide what to do—whether or not to allow the citizens to follow him onwards on his journey to the forest.

As we shall read in the verses that follow herein below, the Lord tried his best to convince the people to go back to their homes and have patience and forbearance, to patiently bear with him and share the burden of bad times, for bad times do not last forever, they would fly by quickly, and the fourteen years would one day appear to be like yesterday when their patience would have borne fruits, because one fine day their beloved Lord would return home after fulfilling his obligations, to join them and make them happy once again.]

कहि सप्रेम मृदु बचन सुहाए । बहुबिधि राम लोग समुझाए ॥ ३ ॥
किए धरम उपदेस घनेरे । लोग प्रेम बस फिरहिं न फेरे ॥ ४ ॥

kahi saprēma mṛdu bacana suhā'ē. bahubidhi rāma lōga samujhā'ē. 3.
ki'ē dharama upadēsa ghanērē. lōga prēma basa phirahim na phērē. 4.

Using most polite, sweet and courteous words that were spoken very affectionately, the Lord tried his best, in different ways, to advice the people to go back home. (3)

He counseled (“upadēsa”; advised) them on the different principles of Dharma (good conduct, morality, righteousness, probity, propriety, ethics etc.) from different angles (in his attempt to persuade the people to return home), but the citizens were so overcome with love and affection for the Lord that they refused to budge from their determination to accompany the Lord¹. To wit, the people declined to return home. (4)

[Note—¹An echo of this sentiment is found in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha 290 along with Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 130; (ii) Doha no. 131 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede it.

We shall read by-and-by that even Bharat had displayed this sentiment when everyone had asked him to accept the crown of Ayodhya in the absence of Lord Ram because it would be the right thing for him to do so and also in accordance to the regulations of Dharma, but Bharat had refused to comply, saying the only Dharma he believes in and recognizes was to serve Lord Ram, and have love and devotion for the Lord. This is the essence of the detailed conference held after Dasrath's death as described in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 171—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 183.]

सीलु सनेहु छाड़ि नहिं जाई । असमंजस बस भे रघुराई ॥ ५ ॥
लोग सोग श्रम बस गए सोई । कछुक देवमायाँ मति मोई ॥ ६ ॥

sīlu sanēhu chāḍi nahim jā'ī. asamanjasa basa bhē raghurā'ī. 5.
lōga sōga śrama basa ga'ē sō'ī. kachuka dēvamāyā'mati mō'ī. 6.

It became a very difficult choice for Lord Ram (*raghurāṭī*)—for he could not bring himself around to either neglect and override his humble subject's courteousness, love and affection for him on the one hand, or his own love and affection and empathy for them on the other hand. This left Lord on the horns of a dilemma; he could not decide what to do¹. (5)

[But finally, the Lord had to take a decision that was emotionally tough and sentimentally hard for him, but nevertheless was necessary at this juncture. In this context, refer to a detailed note appended to verse nos. 1-2 herein above.]

The people were very tired and weary by now, so soon they fell sound asleep; their deep slumber was further aided by the mystical wand of destiny (*dēvamāyām*) (which ensured that they would sleep so soundly that they would not be aware when Lord Ram left them in their sleep and went away stealthily). (6)

[Note—¹Lord Ram was very moved at the plight of his people; he could clearly see the grief and dilemma writ large on their faces when the Lord tried to persuade them to return home. They were courteous and polite enough not to openly speak against Lord Ram's advice, not to tell the Lord that they are not going to turn back, but at the same time their determination to follow the Lord and their reluctance to obey him, as well as the guilt that came with this disobedience of the Lord's request to go home, were equally manifest on their faces.

So therefore, Lord Ram felt pangs of pain inside his heart too; he himself did not want to abandon his loving subjects—for the Lord had an unparalleled reputation for honouring emotions of love and affection, as well as recognizing the value of courtesy, politeness, loyalty and devotion. In this context, refer to Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 24.

But of course, Lord Ram had no choice except to make a harsh decision to leave stealthily and move ahead on the path to the forest. Refer also to a detailed note appended to verse nos. 1-2 that follow Doha no. 84 herein above.]

जबहिं जाम जुग जामिनि बीती । राम सचिव सन कहेउ सप्रीती ॥ ६ ॥
खोज मारि रथु हाँकहु ताता । आन उपायँ बनिहि नहिं बाता ॥ ८ ॥

jabahim jāma juga jāmini bītī. rāma saciva sana kahē'u saprītī. 7.
khōja māri rathu hām̐kahu tātā. āna upāyam̐ banihi nahim bātā. 8.

When two quarters of the night had passed (i.e. when it was around midnight)¹, Lord Ram told the minister (Sumantra) very affectionately and politely as follows. (6)

‘My dear (*tātā*), please drive the chariot in such a way that the tracks left by its wheels are all mixed up (so that no one can determine in which direction we have gone). It is certain that there is no other way that our objective (to go to the forest alone) would be accomplished.’ (8)

[Note—¹The Lord chose midnight for his departure because this time is deemed to be auspicious for a journey in the south direction where the Lord was headed.

Besides this consideration, another point was that by this time everyone was fast asleep. The first two quarters of the night were spent in finding proper place to settle for the night, and the Lord trying to persuade the people to return home. The midnight hours are very quite, and it was the best time for the Lord to make a silent exit.]

दो०. राम लखन सिय जान चढ़ि संभु चरन सिरु नाइ ।
सचिवँ चलायउ तुरत रथु इत उत खोज दुराइ ॥ ८५ ॥

dōhā.

rāma lakhana siya jāna caḍhi sambhu carana siru nā'i.
sacivam' calāya'u turata rathu ita uta khōja durā'i. 85.

Bowing their heads at the holy feet of Lord Shiva, Lord Ram, Laxman and Sita boarded the chariot and left the place for their onwards journey to the forest.

As requested by Lord Ram, the chief minister (Sumantra) drove the chariot in such a fashion that it went in one direction for a moment and in another direction the next moment, leaving tracks on the ground that were all mixed up and confusing so much so that this trick concealed the actual direction in which the chariot finally headed¹. (Doha no. 85)

[Note—¹According to Valmiki's Ramayana, Lord Ram told Sumantra to take the chariot in the north direction first, then retract his path carefully so that no one can deduce in which direction the chariot has actually gone. Refer: Valmiki Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, Canto 46, verse nos. 30-31.

A similar idea is expressed in Veda Vyas' "Adhyatma Ramayan", Ayodhya Kand, Canto 5, verse no. 57 where it is said that the chariot was first driven towards Ayodhya, and then near the city it was suddenly turned towards the forest by another path. In the morning the people thought that the Lord has gone back to Ayodhya, so they hurried to the city, only to discover that the Lord was not there. By that time, the chariot had gone far away.

According to another oral tradition, Sumantra tied some brushy shrubs to the back of the chariot so that when the chariot moved here and there for some time, these shrubs would drag behind and obliterate the tracks on the ground, so that no one would be able to understand what had actually happened.]

चौ०. जागे सकल लोग भएँ भोरू । गे रघुनाथ भयउ अति सोरू ॥ १ ॥
रथ कर खोज कतहुँ नहिं पावहिं । राम राम कहि चहुँ दिसि धावहिं ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

jāgē sakala lōga bha'em' bhōrū. gē raghunātha bhaya'u ati sōrū. 1.
ratha kara khōja katahum' nahim' pāvahim'. rāma rāma kahi cahum' disi
dhāvahim'. 2.

Meanwhile, when the people woke up the next morning and they could not find Lord Ram anywhere, there was a great turmoil. (1)

The people were absolutely stunned and perplexed; all of them searched frantically here and there, but to their dismay that could not descry the chariot anywhere. The people were totally confounded and utterly bewildered even as they wailed and ran agitatedly in all the four directions in search of Lord Ram, calling out “Ram, Ram”, but nowhere could they find their beloved Lord¹. (2)

[Note—¹At the first light of dawn, the people got up to find suddenly to their dismay that Lord Ram was gone. Their perplexity, grief and sorrow knew no bounds; a great alarm was sounded, and those who were yet asleep woke up with a start. Some ran to see where the chariot was, and some ran helter-skelter everywhere to search for Lord Ram, wailing and calling out Lord Ram’s name aloud in the hope they would get an answer. Finding no trace of the Lord or the chariot, the people were crestfallen and dejected even as they lamented, wailed, wept gravely, and wrung their hands in despair.]

मनहुँ बारिनिधि बूड़ जहाजू । भयउ बिकल बड़ बनिक समाजू ॥ ३ ॥
एकहि एक देहिं उपदेसू । तजे राम हम जानि कलेसू ॥ ४ ॥

manahum¹ bārinidhi būṛa jahājū. bhaya'u bikala baṛa banika samājū. 3.
ēkahi ēka dēhim upadēsū. tajē rāma hama jāni kalēsū. 4.

Their condition was as desperate and agitated as that of alarmed and distraught group of merchants who find that their ship loaded with merchandise, which represents their life-savings, their hard toil, as well as their hopes for a good and comfortable life, was rocked by a violent sea, and was about to flounder and sink¹. (3)

They gathered together and talked amongst themselves that Lord Ram had left them behind because the Lord thought that it would cause them great trouble and a lot of misery if he let them accompany him to the forest². (4)

[Note—¹Such hapless and despairing merchants would shout, wail and beat their hearts in abject dismay in the beginning even as the able amongst them would try their best to salvage anything they can, but after some time when they discover that they can’t save anything as the ship itself was going down, they would become so numbed with shock that they would all fall silent because they find themselves helpless against the fury of Nature. Their next priority would be to save their own lives by jumping into lifeboats and make an escape from the rapidly sinking ship while yet there was time. When these seafarers luckily survive to return home empty-handed with their dreams shattered, their heads and shoulders would be drooping, their faces pale, their legs heavy as lead, and they would be ashamed of themselves to have survived to live a life of penury and pity instead of having the courage to boldly go down with the ship.

This analogy is used here to describe the pitiful and sorry condition of the citizens of Ayodhya when they discovered in the morning that Lord Ram had gone away. First they tried to find the whereabouts of the Lord, but finally gave up when they discovered that all efforts to trace the Lord were futile. By-and-by they would slowly return home, dejected, crestfallen, helpless, forlorn and drooping, with a heavy

heart and pale faces, with all their dreams shattered, except to cling on the thread of hope that one day they would be fortunate to see their beloved Lord Ram once again. To speak the truth, this single thread of hope of seeing Lord Ram once again was so strong, and the desire to see it bear fruit so forcible, that it helped the people to cope with this tragedy and live on.

²How could the people conclude that this was the reason why Lord Ram had left them behind? Well, we have read just now in the preceding verses that Lord Ram had tried his best to convince the people to return home, and surely during this process the Lord must have thoroughly explained to them the gravity of the situation and the immensity of the practical problems that everyone was bound to face in the forest if they persisted with their demand to accompany the Lord there. Earlier the Lord had explained such problems to Sita too in an attempt to dissuade her from accompanying him to the wilds.

The distraught citizens concluded that the merciful Lord Ram surely did not wish to put his loving people to undergo extreme hardships that are but natural for a life in the forest, and that too only on his account. The compassionate Lord did not want to make his people suffer for no fault of theirs. He would not like them to be punished for the mischief created in his family by a single wicked member, i.e. Kaikeyi. Lord Ram knew that a king in whose reign the subjects are made to suffer is surely liable to go to hell. Therefore, it was the duty of Lord Ram to ensure that the innocent people of Ayodhya are not punished for a crime they hadn't committed. It was his destiny and ill-fortune that was sending him to suffer in the forest, but why should he let his people suffer too? To wit, it would be highly improper and imprudent for him to allow this to happen.]

निंदहिं आपु सराहहिं मीना । धिग जीवनु रघुबीर बिहीना ॥ ५ ॥

जौं पै प्रिय बियोगु बिधि कीन्हा । तौ कस मरनु न मागें दीन्हा ॥ ६ ॥

nindahim āpu sarāhahim mīnā. dhiga jīvanu raghubīra bihīnā. 5.
jaum pai priya biyōgu bidhi kīnhā. tau kasa maranu na māgēm dīnhā. 6.

The sad and remorseful people condemned and scorned at themselves that they would now have to live a pitiful and miserable life without Lord Ram even as they praised a fish that would not survive without water, as it would prefer to die instead of being alive after being separated from water¹. (5)

They lamented and regretted remorsefully: 'Woe betide upon us, and cursed be the Creator, for why couldn't he grant us death if he wished to give us the agony of separation from someone we loved so very much?

[To wit, if the Creator was so determined to give us the pain of separation from our beloved Lord Ram, then say why couldn't he grant us death at the same time, something which we all would have welcomed as compared to the miserable life which we would now be forced to live without our Lord? Let the Creator be cursed for bringing so much misery upon us, and then not letting us die.]' (6)

[Note—¹The citizens gravely lamented that they did not die automatically as soon as they learnt that Lord Ram has left them behind, unlike the fish that would die a

natural death as soon as it is taken out of the water. This made the people praise the fish for its love of water and its dependence on the latter for survival. They people regret that they did not die a natural death when Lord Ram left them just like the fish that dies as soon as it is made to leave the water. This implies that the people's love and dependence upon Lord Ram, their professed love and affection for the Lord, was obviously no match for the relationship which the fish has with the water. To wit, it was a matter for feeling shame for the citizens—and this shame made them remorseful and regretful to the extreme.]

एहि बिधि करत प्रलाप कलापा । आए अवध भरे परितापा ॥ ७ ॥

बिषम बियोगु न जाइ बखाना । अवधि आस सब राखहिं प्राणा ॥ ८ ॥

ēhi bidhi karata pralāpa kalāpā. ā'ē avadha bharē paritāpā. 7.
biṣama biyōgu na jā'i bakhānā. avadhi āsa saba rākhahim prānā. 8.

In this aforesaid manner, the remorseful people were overwhelmed with regrets, sorrows and grief as they came back to Ayodhya, wailing and lamenting woefully. (7)

Their vexation, their remorse, their lamentations, their excessive grief, as well as the profundity of their sorrows and pitiful conditions were so intense and deep that they cannot be described in words¹.

But finding themselves helpless, the forlorn people passed their time pensively in Ayodhya and managed to survive in the hope that somehow the period (of fourteen years) would pass, and Lord Ram would return to them at the end of this period. (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 51 which also show how miserable the people were.]

दो०. राम दरस हित नेम ब्रत लगे करन नर नारि ।

मनहुँ कोक कोकी कमल दीन बिहीन तमारि ॥ ८६ ॥

dōhā.

rāma darasa hita nēma brata lagē karana nara nāri.
manahum' kōka kōkī kamala dīna bihīna tamāri. 86.

All the citizens of Ayodhya, the males and the females, began practicing austerities and keeping various religious vows with the sole wish to have an auspicious glimpse of Lord Ram once again.

They led a sad and despondent life of misery, sorrow and grief just like the birds Chakva and Chakvi (i.e. the male and the female species of the ruddy goose) as well as the lotus flower live in the absence of the sun¹. (Doha no. 86)

[Note—¹The Chakva, the male ruddy goose, and its female counterpart, the Chakvi, remain close to each other like partners and enjoy this proximity only during the day, i.e. in the presence of sunlight, and as soon as the sun sets they would separate from one another. To wit, without the sun, the life of the male Chakva and the female

Chakvi become miserable, as they are forced to live alone and separated from their beloved.

The lotus flower opens its petals in the sunlight, symbolizing the joy of the lotus when it sees the sun. As soon as the sun sets, the petals close, implying that the lotus feels sad when it loses the sight of the sun.

Likewise was the case of the citizens of Ayodhya, for the absence of Lord Ram from their midst made life very sad and regretful for them as they enjoyed life only as long as they lived in the company of the Lord, and devoid of the Lord life was sorrowful for them.]

चौ०. सीता सचिव सहित दोउ भाई । सृंगबेरपुर पहुँचे जाई ॥ १ ॥

उतरे राम देवसरि देखी । कीन्ह दंडवत हरषु बिसेषी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sītā saciva sahita dō'u bhā'ī. sṛṅgabērapura pahumcē jā'ī. 1.

utarē rāma dēvasari dēkhī. kīnha daṇḍavata haraṣu bisēṣī. 2.

By and by, the two brothers (i.e. Lord Ram and his younger brother Laxman) along with Sita (Lord Ram's consort) arrived at Sringerpur¹. (1)

Seeing the holy river Ganges², which is revered as being the 'river of gods', Lord Ram got down from the chariot and prostrated reverentially before the holy river to pay his obeisance to it. (2)

[Note—¹Sringerpur is a small river-side hamlet on the bank of river Ganges in the present-day district of Allahabad of state of Uttar Pradesh in north India. Presently it is also known as 'Singror Ghat'. It is mainly inhabited by boatmen, called 'Kewats'. It is about 40 Kosas, or roughly 80 miles from the banks of river Tamsa where Lord Ram had halted during his first day out of Ayodhya—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 84.

This small village is situated on the northern banks of river Ganges at a distance of about 22 miles to the north-west of the pilgrim city of Prayag or Allahabad.

This was the second night's halt for Lord Ram. Remember: He was riding on a royal chariot sent before him by his father, and driven by the kingdom's chief minister Sumantra. The Lord had requested Sumantra to drive the chariot as fast as he can to evade being pursued by the poor and distraught citizens of Ayodhya who had been left behind at river Tamsa. So therefore, covering a distance of 80 miles on a swift chariot is not difficult. On the other hand, the Lord's progress from Ayodhya to Tamsa was slow as the chariot was surrounded on all sides by citizens running behind it on foot.

The word "Sringerpur" literally means a place that was hedged on all sides by animal horns, a sort of a temporary wall or fence made of horns of animals that were hunted down by the people who lived in that small village.

According to another interpretation, the word 'Sringer' in Sanskrit means ginger. That means that in ancient times, it was perhaps a center for ginger cultivation.

It is also the place where in ancient times sage Sringi had his hermitage, lending his name to the place that eventually came to be known as ‘Sringberpur’. It was this sage who was called to Ayodhya by king Dasrath to perform the fire sacrifice to get his four sons—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 189.

²The story of ‘the river of the gods’, i.e. the holy river Ganges, and how it descended from heaven to earth, was narrated by sage Vishwamitra to Lord Ram while going to Janakpur from his hermitage. It has been described in detail as a note appended to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 212.

Refer also to: Veda Vyas’ “Adhyatma Ramayan”, Ayodhya Kand, Canto 5, verse nos. 59-60.]

लखन सचिवँ सियँ किए प्रनामा । सबहि सहित सुखु पायउ रामा ॥ ३ ॥
गंग सकल मुद मंगल मूला । सब सुख करनि हरनि सब सूला ॥ ४ ॥

lakhana sacivam̃ siyam̃ ki'ē pranāmā. sabahi sahita sukhu pāya'u rāmā. 3.
gaṅga sakala muda maṅgala mūlā. saba sukha karani harani saba sūlā. 4.

Laxman, the minister (Sumantra) and Sita bowed before the holy river Ganges. Everyone, including Lord Ram, felt very happy (at the sight of the holy river, and be able to pay their respects to it)¹. (3)

Verily indeed, in all sooth and without gainsay, the holy river Ganges is a root (source) of all sorts of happiness (spiritual and worldly), it grants joy, and it can eliminate or destroy sorrows and grief that afflict a person². (4)

[Note—¹It ought to be remarked here that Lord Ram had prostrated before the river as is clearly mentioned in verse no. 2 herein above, while his three companions, viz. Laxman, Sumantra and Sita bowed before the river to pay their respects to it.

²Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 2; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 8-9 that precede Doha no. 5; (iii) Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 14; (iv) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 15.

The glory and divinity of river Ganges have been extolled by Tulsidas in his following two excellent books too: (i) Vinai Patrika, in its verse nos. 17-20; and (ii) Kavita-wali Ramayan, Uttar Kand, verse nos. 145-147. An elaborate English version of these wonderful and matchless books have been written and published by this humble author separately, and is available for the reader on the same platform from where he or she has accessed the present book Ram Charit Manas that the reader is reading now.

River Ganges is believed to grant deliverance and salvation to devotees who bathe in its water with faith. From worldly perspective, it provides refreshment to weary travellers who bathe in its cool water and sip it. It is a source of water to a large population of the plains through which it flows, it irrigates the plains, and down the ages great cities have sprung up all along its course from the Himalayas in the north, to the ocean in Bay of Bengal on the east coast of India.]

कहि कहि कोटिक कथा प्रसंगा । रामु बिलोकहि गंग तरंगा ॥ ५ ॥
सचिवहि अनुजहि प्रियहि सुनाई । बिबुध नदी महिमा अधिकाई ॥ ६ ॥

kahi kahi kōṭika kathā prasaṅgā. rāmu bilōkahim gaṅga taraṅgā. 5.
sacivahi anujahi priyahi sunā'ī. bibudha nadī mahimā adhikā'ī. 6.

Charmed by the magnificent sight of this holy river that spread before them, and watching with fascination its swift currents, Lord Ram was so thrilled and exhilarated that he narrated many (or countless) stories¹ from the scriptures to his companions (Sita, Laxman and Sumantra). (5)

Lord Ram told his minister (Sumantra), his younger brother (Laxman) and his beloved wife (Sita) many stories related to the great glories and divinity of river Ganges². (6)

[Note—¹This shows that Lord Ram was a repository of knowledge, and that he knew countless stories narrated in different scriptures.

The actual phrase used in the text is “kōṭika kathā prasaṅgā”, literally meaning hundreds of stories and episodes that were relevant to river Ganges.

Later on in the narration we shall read that while living in Chitrakoot, Lord Ram would often tell stories from the Purans and Vedas to Sita and Laxman when he found them sad in order to entertain them and help them divert their attention from memories of home, their sense of loneliness, and sufferings due to miseries of forest life—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 141.

²Earlier, when Lord Ram and Laxman were on their way to Janakpur in the company of sage Vishwamitra, the sage too was so thrilled at the sight of river Ganges that he had narrated to the Lord the story of how the river descended from heaven and abided on earth, and told them about the river's glories—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 212.]

मज्जनु कीन्ह पंथ श्रम गयऊ । सुचि जलु पिअत मुदित मन भयऊ ॥ ७ ॥
सुमिरत जाहि मिटइ श्रम भारू । तेहि श्रम यह लौकिक ब्यवहारू ॥ ८ ॥

majjanu kīnha pantha śrama gaya'ū. suci jalu pi'ata mudita mana bhaya'ū. 7.
sumirata jāhi miṭa'i śrama bhārū. tēhi śrama yaha laukika byavahārū. 8.

All of them bathed in the river which relieved them from the weariness of a long journey and made them feel refreshed. Then they drank the clean water which rejuvenated them, and made them feel exhilarated in their hearts and minds. (7)

What a fascinating and paradoxical thing is this that the Lord whose mere remembrance would eliminate the greatest of burdens and weariness from the mind and heart of a devotee, would himself feel weary and need refreshment by bathing in a river and drink its water to feel rejuvenated!

Verily indeed, Lord Ram feeling tired after a long journey is his worldly act meant to comply with worldly standards that were applicable to humans, because presently the Supreme Being was in the form of a human being, and so he was obliged to act accordingly¹. (8)

[Note—¹This single verse would explain the many questions that arise regarding Lord Ram's actions and deeds in this world which were like any other human being, and which obviously belied the fact of his being the Supreme Being himself. The answer to all such doubts is simple: being an expert actor, as was expected from the Lord because he was perfect in every way and every thing he did, Lord Ram had to play his role of a human being also to perfection. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 121—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 122.}

A person would get tired after two days of continuous journey—the first day from Ayodhya to river Tamsa, and the second day to river Ganges, with no sleep in the intervening night. Remember: Lord Ram spent the first half of the previous night trying to persuade the citizens to go back home, and then he boarded the chariot in the middle of the night to stealthily move out—hence, no sleep.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 119.]

दो०. सुद्ध सच्चिदानंदमय कंद भानुकुल केतु।

चरित करत नर अनुहरत संसृति सागर सेतु ॥ ८७ ॥

dōhā.

sud'dha saccidānandamaya kanda bhānukula kētu.
carita karata nara anuharata sansṛti sāgara sētu. 87.

Verily, Lord Ram—who was like a root (i.e. an embodiment) of the virtues of purity, eternal bliss and beatitude, a personified form of the cosmic Consciousness, and like a flag that symbolizes the glories and greatness the Solar Race—acted and behaved like an ordinary human being. The stories that narrate the Lord's actions and behaviour in this world are like a boat that can take a person across the turbulent ocean symbolized by life in this gross mortal world (to provide him with the blessing of liberation and deliverance from the cycle of transmigration)¹. (Doha no. 87)

[Note—¹There are countless verses in Ram Charit Manas that reiterate this view. For instance, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 50 along with Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes it; (ii) Doha no. 51; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 8 that precede Doha no. 116; (iv) Chaupai line nos. 5 that precedes Doha no. 119; (v) Chaupai line nos. 6 that precedes Doha no. 120; (b) Ayodhya Kand, (vi) Doha no. 93 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it; (vii) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 127; (c) Lanka Kand, (viii) Doha no. 14—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 15; (ix) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 110; (d) Uttar Kand, (x) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 48.]

चौ०. यह सुधि गुहँ निषाद जब पाई । मुदित लिए प्रिय बंधु बोलाई ॥ १ ॥

लिए फल मूल भेंट भरि भारा । मिलन चलेउ हियँ हरषु अपारा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

yaha sudhi guham^ṁ niṣāda jaba pāī. mudita li'ē priya bandhu bōlāī. 1.
li'ē phala mūla bhēṇṭa bhari bhārā. milana calē'u hiyaṁ^ṁ haraṣu apārā. 2.

When this information (of the arrival of Lord Ram and his companions at Sringeripur, on the banks of river Ganges) reached Guha Nishad¹, he felt very happy, and he immediately summoned all those who were dear and close to him, such as his friends and relatives. (1)

He (Guha Nishad) collected large numbers of fruits as well as edible roots and stems as gift-offerings, and loaded them in baskets. Then, with an exhilarated heart, he proceeded to go and meet Lord Ram with these gifts². (2)

[Note—¹Who was “Guha Nishad (guham^ṁ niṣāda)”? According to Valmiki's Ramayana, Ayodhya Kand, Canto 50, verse nos. 33-34, he was the king of this area, i.e. of Sringeripur, and he belonged to the Nishad community who were either boatmen, making a living by ferrying people across the river Ganges, or were elephant tamers (because the word “Nishad” means one who rides on an elephant). However, the latter meaning, viz. ‘one who rides an elephant’, may also imply that since Guha Nishad was the king or ruler of his community, he was the only person who rode on an elephant. To wit, he was the head of the boatman community living along the river Ganges, and he rode an elephant.

The word “Guha” means a cave, and the word “Nishad” means a driver of an elephant. So, these people dwelled in ancient dwellings made of mud or earth, with a small opening on one side to act as a door, and were more like caves along the sides of hills and mountains rather than like ordinary huts found in villages.

He was a friend of Lord Ram* and a powerful ruler of the realm under his jurisdiction. Lord Ram had made a stopover to meet and embrace him affectionately while returning from Lanka#, and the Lord had himself called Guha Nishad his ‘friend’ at the time of saying good-bye to him after the coronation ceremony at Ayodhya* {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, *(i) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 88; and Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 20; #Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-12 and Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 121.}

He was a member of a tribe that was considered an out-caste, because this tribe descended from a Brahmin who had married a Shudra or low-caste woman; he engaged in hunting animals too. So therefore, he was regarded as very lowly—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chanda line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 121. A wonderful and the most remarkable thing to note here is not who Guha Nishad was, but that Lord Ram had made him his dear friend. This clearly implies that our beloved Lord Ram treated everyone alike, with equanimity and justice, for he made no distinction based on the birth of an individual but considered his qualities and qualifications and virtues that would make that person eligible to have Lord Ram's affection. In spite of a low birth and his lowly profession, Nishad otherwise a nice person, devoted to the Lord, god fearing, and lived according to principles of Dharma as applicable to his caste and vocation.

According to Padma Puran, Bhumi-Khand, this tribe was dark-complexioned, short in stature or dwarfish in height, with a long ape-like face, ferocious eyes, large and muscular arms, and a pot-like belly. They lived in forested areas and hills outside cities and villages. Hence the epithet “Guha”—cave dwellers; and “Nishad”—one who is prohibited from entering populated areas of civil society.

These people lived a secretive life (Guha) in the sense that they were cut-off from mainstream society. The cave-like dwellings helped them to protect themselves from wild animals. We have read in the note appended to verse no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 87 herein above that this place was called ‘Sringberpur’, as it was surrounded by a strong fence made of horns (Sring) of wild animals that were hunted by these people.

²Whatever was available to him, Guha Nishad collected all those things to present them to his guest, Lord Ram. Since these people lived in forested areas, the gift consisted of fruits and edible roots and stems. It ought to be noted here that throughout his forest travel, Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman would eat such things.

Later on in the Story we shall read that when Lord Ram reached Chitrakoot and decided to stay there for a while, a large number of people of the tribes of that part of the world, i.e. the Kols and the Kirats, went to meet the Lord and pay their respects to him, and as gift-offerings they too had taken similar things with them—viz. fruits, edible roots and stems, which they arranged in plates made of leaves. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 135.}]

करि दंडवत भेंट धरि आगें । प्रभुहि बिलोकत अति अनुरागें ॥ ३ ॥

सहज सनेह बिबस रघुराई । पूँछी कुसल निकट बैठाई ॥ ४ ॥

kari daṇḍavata bhēṇṭa dhari āgēm. prabhuhi bilōkata ati anurāgēm. 3.
sahaja sanēha bibasa raghurāī. pūṁchī kusala nikata baiṭhāī. 4.

Placing the gifts that he had brought with him before Lord Ram, Guha Nishad prostrated himself before the Lord; and while looking at the Lord he was overwhelmed with great affection¹. (3)

Meanwhile, observing that Nishad had a natural love for the Lord in his heart (that was too obvious to go unnoticed), Lord Ram was moved by this emotion and natural affection sprouted in him too (for Nishad). Verily indeed, Lord Ram was always influenced by the glorious virtues of love and affection that sprouted naturally in one’s heart².

Then the Lord welcomed Nishad, enquired about his welfare, and made the latter sit down near him³. (4)

[Note—¹This is also the way that the tribals, known as the Kols and the Kirats, had met Lord Ram at Chitrakoot. They placed the gifts of fruits, edible stems and roots before the Lord, and stood overwhelmed with affection before the Lord—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 135.

Refer also to: Veda Vyas’ “Adhyatma Ramayan”, Ayodhya Kand, Canto 5, verse nos. 62-63.

²Lord Ram knew only one factor by which he recognized whether the other person was worthy of his attention—and this single element or virtue was to have natural ‘love and affection’ for the Lord—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 137. This love and affection should be natural, and not artificial.

The other equally important factor was the virtue of ‘devotion for the Lord’—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Aranya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 35 (as told to Sabari); (b) Uttar Kand, (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 44 (Lord Ram himself tells this to the citizens of Ayodhya); (iii) Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 85 (Lord Ram tells Kaagbhusund, the saintly crow).

In this context, we must add one more quality, which is the ‘desire to surrender oneself before the Lord unconditionally’—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 48 (as told to Vibhishan).

All these qualities were present in Guha Nishad, and this endeared him to Lord Ram.

³Lord Ram was always very polite and courteous in his manners; he would welcome everyone who came to meet him with courtesy, make the guest feel comfortable, asked about his well-being, and affectionately made him sit very close to indicate that the guest was a friend of the Lord, even though at times he may be a complete stranger. In this context, refer to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 135; (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 137 (Lord Ram’s meeting with the Kols and Kirats); (b) Sundar Kand, (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 46 (Lord Ram’s meeting with Vibhishan, the brother of the demon king Ravana).]

नाथ कुसल पद पंकज देखें । भयउँ भागभाजन जन लेखें ॥ ५ ॥

देव धरनि धनु धामु तुम्हारा । मैं जनु नीचु सहित परिवारा ॥ ६ ॥

nātha kusala pada pañkaja dēkhēm. bhaya'um¹ bhāgabhājana jana lēkhēm. 5.
dēva dharani dhanu dhāmu tumhārā. maiṁ janu nīcu sahita parivārā. 6.

[When Lord Ram asked about Guha Nishad’s welfare, the latter replied—]

‘Oh Lord (nātha), the very sight of thine august lotus-like feet is the root of all welfares and auspiciousness. Hence, since I havest been fortunate today to get this privilege, I consider myself as very blessed and lucky¹. (5)

Oh Lord (dēva)! This land, the wealth, the home—nay, everything that I possess is thine. Verily, I am, along with my whole family, thy humble servant². (2)

[Note—¹The Kols and the Kirats of Chitrakoot have expressed a similar emotion when they met Lord Ram. Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 135; (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 136.

A similar idea is expressed by Vibhishan, the brother of Ravana, the king of demons, when he came to surrender before Lord Ram as narrated in Ram Charit

Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 47 along with Chaupai line nos. 1 and 5 that precede it.

²Similarly, once again, the Kols and the Kirats told Lord Ram that they would be willing to serve the Lord in any way they can: apropos—Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 136.

Later on, Sugriv, the prince of Kishkindha, too tells Lord Ram that he is willing to serve the Lord as well as he can—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 5.]

कृपा करिअ पुर धारिअ पाऊ । थापिअ जनु सबु लोगु सिहाऊ ॥ ७ ॥
कहेहु सत्य सबु सखा सुजाना । मोहि दीन्ह पितु आयसु आना ॥ ८ ॥

krpā kari'a pura dhāri'a pā'ū. thāpi'a janu sabu lōgu sihā'ū. 7.
kahēhu satya sabu sakhā sujānā. mōhi dīnha pitu āyasu ānā. 8.

Lord, please be kind enough to do me a favour by stepping in (i.e. by visiting) my home-town (i.e. the capital of Srīngberpur)¹, as this wouldst give me honour and makest me the envy of other people.' (7)

Lord Ram replied graciously: 'My good and wise friend (sakhā sujānā), whatever you sayest is true indeed, but unfortunately my father hast given me a different order. [To wit, my dear friend, I am sorry to disappoint thee and decline thine request to visit thy town, as my father hast commanded me to live in the forest as a hermit, and so I can't visit any village or town during this period.]² (8)

[Note—¹It was a village, a "Gram" (grāma)—refer Doha no. 88, and Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it herein below.

²Refer Doha no. 88 herein below where Lord Ram has clearly explained the reason why he is unwilling enter Guha Nishad's town.

Lord Ram had refused to enter Kishkindha when Sugriv invited him, and similarly he refused to enter Lanka when Vibhishan too invited him. The Lord gave the same reason—that he ought naught to go into a city or town for the period of fourteen years of his forest exile as it would violate his father's words.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Kishkindha Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 12 (as told to Sugriv); and (b) Lanka Kand, (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-8 and Chanda line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 116 (as told to Vibhishan, with the only difference that the Lord cites Bharat's precarious condition if any further delay is made in his returning to Ayodhya, instead of citing his father's words that bars him from entering a city—simply because the time of fourteen years was about to end, and with it would also end the restriction imposed by his father's words on him).]

दो०. बरष चारिदस बासु बन मुनि ब्रत बेषु अहारु ।
ग्राम बासु नहिं उचित सुनि गुहहि भयउ दुखु भारु ॥ ८८ ॥

dōhā.

baraṣa cāridasa bāsu bana muni brata bēṣu ahāru.
grāma bāsu nahim ucita suni guhahi bhaya'u dukhu bhāru. 88.

Lord Ram told Guha Nishad: 'I am expected to dwell in the forest for fourteen years like a hermit, i.e. to live like hermit; to observe all the restraints and practice all the austerities and vows that a hermit is expected to follow.

In this situation, it wouldst not be proper for me to stay in a village (or town).¹

When Guha heard this, he felt very sorry and sad. (Doha no. 88)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 12 where Lord Ram has said the same thing to Sugriv, the newly appointed king of Kishkindha, when the latter requested the Lord to visit the capital to bless everyone.

We read a similar conversation between Guha Nishad and Lord Ram in Veda Vyas' "Adhyatma Ramayan", Ayodhya Kand, Canto 5, verse nos. 64-68.]

चौ०. राम लखन सिय रूप निहारी । कहहिं सप्रेम ग्राम नर नारी ॥ १ ॥
ते पितु मातु कहहु सखि कैसे । जिन्ह पठए बन बालक ऐसे ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

rāma lakhana siya rūpa nihārī. kahahim saprēma grāma nara nārī. 1.
tē pitu mātu kahahu sakhi kaisē. jinha paṭha'ē bana bālaka aisē. 2.

Beholding the bewitching beauty of Lord Ram, Laxman and Sita, the inhabitants of the village (of Sringeripur who had come with Guha Nishad to see them), both the males and the females, talked amongst themselves as follows— (1)

'Friends (sakhi), say what kind of parents are they who have been so heartlessly as to send such (tender) children out into the forest?'¹ (2)

[Note—¹This sense of amazement, bewilderment, remorse and regret was a common refrain amongst all the people, whether the villagers or the travellers, whom Lord Ram met on his way into the forest—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-2, 5-6 that precede Doha no. 110; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 111; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 114; (iv) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 116; (v) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 122.

In Tulsidas' book "Geetawali Ramayan", Ayodhya Kand, there are extensive verses, such as for example nos. 15-30, 33-35, that describe the magnificent sight of Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman as they walked down on the road to the forest, as well as the regret and sorrows that overwhelmed everyone when they learnt why the three were heading to the forest.

Refer also to Tulsidas' "Kavitawali Ramayan", Ayodhya Kand, verse nos. 13, 15, 21.]

एक कहहिं भल भूपति कीन्हा । लोयन लाहु हमहि बिधि दीन्हा ॥ ३ ॥

तब निषादपति उर अनुमाना । तरु सिंसुपा मनोहर जाना ॥ ४ ॥

ēka kahahim̐ bhala bhūpati kīnhā. lōyana lāhu hamahi bidhi dīnhā. 3.
taba niṣādapati ura anumānā. taru sinsupā manōhara jānā. 4.

Someone among them, however, praised the king (Dasrath), saying that the king had done a good thing (by sending Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman to the forest), because by this device or by doing so (*bidhi*), as well as by the grace of God (*bidhi*), he has given everyone a chance to reap a rich reward of having an eyesight¹. (3)

Then the king of the Nishad community (*niṣādapati*) thought for a while to find a place where Lord Ram and his companions could rest, and descried nearby a pleasant Sesame tree (*sinsupā*)² with a cool shade (that would suit the purpose). (4)

[Note—¹Later on we shall read that this sentiment was expressed by countless other people who met Lord Ram on his way to the forest—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 114; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 120.

The word “*bidhi*” has a dual meaning here: it means (i) ‘this way, this device, this means, or by doing this’ with reference to Dasrath sending Lord Ram to the forest, as this has given the country folks a rare chance to see the Lord from so close; and (ii) ‘God, the Creator’, for it is the God by whose grace this rare opportunity to see Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman from so close was given to the ordinary people of the countryside.

This word has been put so strategically in this verse that it refers to Dasrath as well as to the Creator. With respect to Dasrath it means that by sending Lord Ram to the forest, the king has provided the ordinary people a means to see Lord Ram and enjoy the beautiful sight with the help of their eyes, thereby making them also thank the Creator for granting them this opportunity. With respect to ‘God, the Creator’, this verse means that these humble people thank the Creator for providing them with eyesight with which they are able to enjoy the magnificent sight of Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman from so close, because without eyesight they wouldn’t have had this privilege.

²The word “*sinsupā*” normally means a Sesame tree, but it also refers to the Ashoka tree (known as *Saraca Indica* or *Jonesia Ashoka*), the Custard Apple tree, or the Gum tree (Latin name: *Bdellium Olibanum*). It cannot be said with certainty which kind of tree it was, but in all probability it was a Sesame tree as its flowers are fragrant and beautiful to look at, so Guha Nishad selected it as he thought it was fit for Lord Ram and his companions to take rest under its shade.]

लै रघुनाथहि ठाउँ देखावा । कहेउ राम सब भाँति सुहावा ॥ ५ ॥

पुरजन करि जोहारु घर आए । रघुबर संध्या करन सिधाए ॥ ६ ॥

lai raghunāthahi ṭhā'um̐ dēkhāvā. kahē'u rāma saba bhām̐ti suhāvā. 5.
purajana kari jōhāru ghara ā'ē. raghubara sandhyā karana sidhā'ē. 6.

Guha Nishad took Lord Ram to that place and showed him the site he had selected for the Lord to rest for the night. Lord Ram praised the location and said that it was pleasant and comfortable by all means. (5)

After that, Guha and those who came with him paid their respects to the Lord and went back home.

When they had gone away, Lord Ram, the most exalted member of king Raghu's family (*raghubara*), went to do his evening rituals and offer prayers that are collectively known as doing 'Sandhya'¹ (before retiring for the day). (6)

[Note—¹The word “*sandhyā*” means ‘evening’, as well as a period of time when two phases of time during a full cycle of day and night meet: i.e. at dawn when night and day meet; at noon when the morning ends and afternoon time begins; and at dusk when evening time and night time meet.

During this ritual, a worshipper washes himself with clean water, oblations are offered to the family deity, and some prayers are said.

We have read earlier too about Lord Ram doing Sandhya when he was in Janakpur with sage Vishwamitra—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 226 (on the 1st day of arrival at Janakpur); (ii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 237 (on the 2nd day of arrival at Janakpur).]

गुहँ सँवारि साँथरी डसाई । कुस किसलयमय मृदुल सुहाई ॥ ७ ॥

सुचि फल मूल मधुर मृदु जानी । दोना भरि भरि राखेसि पानी ॥ ८ ॥

guham' samvāri sām̐tharī ḍasā'ī. kusa kisalayamaya mṛdula suhā'ī. 7.
suci phala mūla madhura mṛdu jānī. dōnā bhari bhari rākhēsi pānī. 8.

Guha Nishad spread on the ground a soft mat made of green grass and leaves (on which Lord Ram and Sita would sit to relax, as well as sleep during the night). (7)

Then he (Guha) selected sweet and succulent fruits as well as edible roots and stems, arranged them on plates (made of folded leaves), and placed them on the ground before the Lord, along with drinking water filled in cups that too were made of leaves (called “*dōnā*”)¹. (8)

[Note—¹We shall read soon, as we move on with the Story, that the villagers who met Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman on their way to the forest had also spread a soft mat of grass and leaves on the ground, and had brought water in pitchers to place it before the Lord and his companions to refresh themselves literally the same way as Guha is doing now—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 114 along with Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it. In this case, the villagers placed ‘pitchers’ filled with drinking water, and not ‘cups made of leaves’ or *dōnā* as is the case here with Guha. The reason is that Nishad community was very backward, and since leaves and grass were abundantly available to them in the surrounding forests and fields, they had become accustomed to use these things for making plates and cups.

Even today, during religious ceremonies and rituals, people consider plates and cups made of leaves or baked mud as a better and cleaner option than those made from artificial material such as steel, fiber, plastic, glass and paper.]

दो०. सिय सुमंत्र भ्राता सहित कंद मूल फल खाइ ।

सयन कीन्ह रघुबंसमनि पाय पलोत्त भाइ ॥ ८९ ॥

dōhā.

siya sumantra bhrātā sahita kanda mūla phala khā'i.
sayana kīnha raghubansamani pāya palōṭata bhā'i. 89.

After Lord Ram, along with Sita, Sumantra and Laxman, had partaken of the edible roots and stems as well as the fruits (that Guha Nishad had offered them), the Lord, who was like a gem in the race of king Raghu (raghubansamani), lay down for the night to rest, even as his brother (Laxman) pressed and massaged the Lord's feet to give him comfort and remove weariness of the journey¹. (Doha no. 89)

[Note—¹Earlier we have read that when sage Vishwamitra reclined for rest in Janakpur, the two brothers had pressed and massaged the sage's feet to give him comfort and remove the weariness of the long journey on foot from his hermitage to Janakpur—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 226.

A little while later, when Lord Ram reclined to go to sleep himself, Laxman had pressed and massaged the Lord's feet as he is doing now on the banks of river Ganges on the Lord's first night of sleep after leaving Ayodhya—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 226.]

चौ०. उठे लखनु प्रभु सोवत जानी । कहि सचिवहि सोवन मृदु बानी ॥ १ ॥

कछुक दूरि सजि बान सरासन । जागन लगे बैठि बीरासन ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

uṭhē lakhanu prabhu sōvata jānī. kahi sacivahi sōvana mṛdu bānī. 1.
kachuka dūri saji bāna sarāsana. jāgana lagē baiṭhi bīrāsana. 2.

Laxman got up when he found that the Lord (Ram) had fallen asleep; then he sweetly (politely) advised the minister (Sumantra) to retire himself. (1)

Thence, Laxman himself went a little distance from the place, took out his arrows and the bow, and sat on vigil like an alert guard in a posture in which brave warriors sit (bīrāsana)¹. (20)

[Note—¹Laxman did not go to sleep—for he sat on vigil to protect Lord Ram and Sita from any untoward incident or any secret attack from any quarter while they slept. It was his daily routine, for he had kept vigil and stayed awake, ready with his arrow and bow in case any emergency arose, not only during this night but also throughout the Lord's fourteen long years in the forest.

The word “bīrāsana” literally means ‘the way a brave warrior would sit’. It is called an ‘Aasan’ because the word means to ‘sit’. It is a posture wherein the person sits erect with one of his legs bent inwards from the knee, the foot tucked at right angles under the buttock of that side, and the toes acting as the pivot to lift his body and keep it erect, while the other leg is bent at right angles at the knee, with the foot lying flat on the ground to support and give stability to the body.

This sitting posture enables the warrior to get up straight immediately when needed, and it also helps one to keep alert, and to fight laziness and the natural urge to lie down and sleep.]

गुहँ बोलाइ पाहरू प्रतीती । ठावँ ठावँ राखे अति प्रीती ॥ ३ ॥
आपु लखन पहिँ बैठेउ जाई । कटि भाथी सर चाप चढ़ाई ॥ ४ ॥

guham' bōlā'i pāharū pratīti. ṭhāvam' ṭhāvam' rākhē ati prīti. 3.
āpu lakhana pahīṁ baiṭhē'u jāī. kaṭi bhāthī sara cāpa caṛhāī. 4.

In the meantime, Guha also did his bit to protect Lord Ram and Sita as they slept by calling trusted men and appointing them to stand guard at strategic places at different points. (3)

Guha himself tied the quiver around his waist, took out an arrow and mounted it on the bow, and came to sit down with Laxman to join the latter in keeping vigil¹. (4)

[Note—¹Guha Nishad was intelligent, courteous and prudent ruler. When he saw what Laxman was doing, he immediately understood its meaning, and so he decided to help Laxman to protect the Lord and Sita by appointing guards at strategic locations to keep vigil for the night.

After arranging all this, he came and joined Laxman. Guha wanted to give Laxman company, and to help the latter overcome loneliness by chatting politely with him to pass time. It was a gesture of courteousness on part of Guha as he had played host to Lord Ram and his companions at Sringberpur.]

सोवत प्रभुहि निहारि निषादू । भयउ प्रेम बस हृदयँ बिषादू ॥ ५ ॥
तनु पुलकित जलु लोचन बहई । बचन सप्रेम लखन सन कहई ॥ ६ ॥

sōvata prabhuhi nihāri niṣādū. bhaya'u prēma basa hṛdayam' biṣādū. 5.
tanu pulakita jalu lōcana bahaī. bacana saprēma lakhana sana kahaī. 6.

When Guha Nishad pensively looked at Lord Ram (sleeping on the ground on a makeshift bed of grass and leaves), the sight made him despondent and distraught, and his heart felt very sad and distressed. (5)

He (was so moved emotionally that he) had goose bumps on his body even as tears rolled down his eyes. Overcome with sadness and remorse, he spoke to Laxman affectionately, while rueing at the cruel turn of fate as he lamented and said --- (6)

भूपति भवन सुभायँ सुहावा । सुरपति सदन न पटतर पावा ॥ ७ ॥
मनिमय रचित चारु चौबारे । जनु रतिपति निज हाथ सँवारे ॥ ८ ॥

bhūpati bhavana subhāyam̐ suhāvā. surapati sadanu na paṭatara pāvā. 7.
manimaya racita cāru caubārē. janu ratipati nija hātha sam̐vārē. 8.

Nishad said: ‘The king’s (i.e. Dasrath’s) palace is inherently a very comfortable and pleasant place; even the abode of the King of Gods in heaven is no match for its magnificence, its grandeur, its beauty and its charm¹. (7)

It has four grand doorways (or gates—“cāru caubārē”) which are embellished with glittering gems and priceless stones, making it (i.e. the palace) look so wonderful and majestic that it seems to be a skilled craftsmanship of Kamdeo (i.e. the patron god of beauty and magnificence) who himself had designed and constructed it with his own hands (i.e. under personal supervision).’ (8)

[Note—¹The majesty and grandeur of the royal palace has been described elsewhere too in Ram Charit Manas—apropos: Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 195; (ii) Doha no. 297 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede it; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precedes Doha no. 345.]

दो०. सुचि सुबिचित्र सुभोगमय सुमन सुगंध सुबास ।
पलंग मंजु मनिदीप जहँ सब बिधि सकल सुपास ॥ १० ॥

dōhā.

suci subicitra subhōgamaya sumana sugandha subāsa.
palam̐ga man̐ju manidīpa jaham̐ saba bidhi sakala supāsa. 90.

[Continuing to describe the majesty and grandeur of the royal palace where Lord Ram used to live a while ago, Nishad says remorsefully—]

‘That palace is so beautiful, charming, pleasant and comfortable, and is well provided for with all material things for comfort and pleasure. Sweet fragrance of flowers and the appealing scent of perfumes pervade it everywhere. It has beds studded with gems, and is lighted by lamps that are either made of or studded with priceless stones¹.

To wit, all imaginable kinds of physical comforts and material things for pleasure are abundant in that palace (in which Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman had been living just a while ago).’ (Doha no. 90)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 356 where we read a similar description of the inner palace of the king where Lord Ram and Sita lived after their marriage.]

चौ०. बिबिध बसन उपधान तुराई । छीर फेन मृदु बिसद सुहाई ॥ १ ॥

तहँ सिय रामु सयन निसि करहीं । निज छबि रति मनोज मदु हरहीं ॥ २ ॥
ते सिय रामु साथरीं सोए । श्रमित बसन बिनु जाहिं न जोए ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

bibidha basana upadhāna turā'īm. chīra phēna mṛdu bisada suhā'īm. 1.
tahaṁ siya rāmu sayana nisi karahīm. nija chabi rati manōja madu harahīm.
2.
tē siya rāmu sātharīm sō'ē. śramita basana binu jāhim na jō'ē. 3.

[Describing the comforts of the royal palace, Nishad continued with the expression of his deep remorse and sorrow as well as the astonishment and wonder that he felt at the sudden turn of events that forced Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman out of the comforts of a king's palace to live a life in the harsh environment of the forest that was completely alien to them.]

Nishad rued and said further: 'The palace had magnificent clothes, pillows, beds and seats that were soft and tender as rolls of fluffy cotton. (1)

It was in such a place that Lord Ram and Sita used to sleep during the night¹. Their charming sight would put to shame the pride of Kamdeo and Rati (the patron god of beauty and charm, and his wife respectively) in this respect². (2)

It is such a wonder as well as so regretful that the same Lord Ram and Sita are now so tired that they are sleeping soundly on a coarse bed made of leaves and grass³! (3)

[Note—¹The analogy of Kamdeo and his wife Rati is used here as they are regarded as the most beautiful couple in creation. They are very proud of their physical charm, but when they saw Lord Ram and Sita they felt ashamed of their pretension of being the most beautiful couple in the world, for they discovered that they are no match when compared with Lord Ram and Sita.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 and 4 that precede Doha no. 356.

²Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 220; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 243; (iii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 327.

³The amazement and sadness of Guha Nishad is obvious here. He says that it is matter of wonder that Lord Ram and Sita who were accustomed to sleep on soft mattresses and magnificent beds in a room that had pleasant fragrance of flowers and perfumes, are now sleeping as comfortably on hard ground on a coarse bed of leaves and grass, with the smell of coarse earth as the only scent in the air. They are so tired that this coarse bed and hard ground matters not to them.

This situation made Nishad very sad and remorseful. He rued at the strange and unpredictable nature of Creator, as well as the cruelty of destiny that they often times act ruthlessly, without having any remorse or regret.

Here we learn a subtle lesson that tells us the secret of a good night's sleep: a tired person who has toiled the whole day, who never worries or regrets about any thing that happened to him while he was awake, and who takes every development in

his stride without unduly getting upset or perturbed—such a person can only have a refreshing and a good night of sleep. Comfortable bed and abundance of wealth and opulence do not ensure this privilege.]

मातु पिता परिजन पुरबासी । सखा सुसील दास अरु दासी ॥ ४ ॥
जोगवहिं जिन्हहि प्रान की नाई । महि सोवत तेइ राम गोसाई ॥ ५ ॥

mātu pitā parijana purabāsī. sakhā susīla dāsa aru dāsī. 4.
jōgavahim̐ jinhahi prāna kī nā'īm̐. mahi sōvata tē'i rāma gōsā'īm̐. 5.

The parents (mother, father), all family members, all the citizens of Ayodhya, all good-natured friend, as well as devoted servants and maids --- (4)

--- All of them took care of and loved Lord Ram, and cherished his company, as they would take care of, love and cherish their own lives¹.

Alack-a-day! It is so regrettable and sad that (today) the same Lord Ram is sleeping on hard ground (with no one to serve and take care of his comforts)! (5)

[Note—¹A similar idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 204.]

पिता जनक जग बिदित प्रभाऊ । ससुर सुरेस सखा रघुराऊ ॥ ६ ॥
रामचंदु पति सो बैदेही । सोवत महि बिधि बाम न केही ॥ ७ ॥
सिय रघुबीर कि कानन जोगू । करम प्रधान सत्य कह लोगू ॥ ८ ॥

pitā janaka jaga bidita prabhā'ū. sasura surēsa sakhā raghurā'ū. 6.
rāmacandu pati sō baidēhī. sōvata mahi bidhi bāma na kēhī. 7.
siya raghubīra ki kānana jōgū. karama pradhāna satya kaha lōgū. 8.

Speaking of Sita, Nishad laments: 'She (i.e. Sita), whose father Janak is renowned the world over, whose father-in-law (i.e. king Dasrath) is a friend of Indra (the king of gods) and who himself is the king of the illustrious family descending from the ancient king Raghu, --- (6)

--- Whose dear husband is Lord Chandra (i.e. Lord Ram who is as beautiful and glorious as the full moon; "rāmacandu")— verily indeed, it is so regrettable and sad that the same Sita (the daughter of Vaideha, another name of king Janak; "baidēhī") is sleeping on the hard ground.

Truly it is said that no one can be certain when the Creator would turn hostile and go against a person¹. (7)

Alack-a-day! Are Lord Ram and Sita fit for a forest; are they meant to live a harsh life in the environment of the wilds? [To wit, the answer is affirmatively a definite 'no'.]

Indeed and in all sooth it is rightly said by everyone who is wise and sagacious that 'every living being is bound to do his duties as determined by his fate and destiny'². (8)

[Note—¹Nishad feels very remorseful in his heart and laments at the whimsical ways of the Creator. He bitterly regrets that the Creator often times acts very rudely, inexplicably and unpredictably as is proved by the present case of Lord Ram and Sita. Who could ever have imagined, even in one's wildest of dreams, that someone of such high birth and pedigree, who were born as prince and princess of famous kingdoms, as son and daughter of renowned kings like Dasrath and Janak, who were destined to become king and queen themselves, would be so suddenly and unceremoniously pushed out of their homes, disinherited and debarred from their natural entitlements, to live a life of austerity and deprivation, like a hermit, in the harsh environment of the forest.

²How does this maxim applies to Lord Ram? Well, let us not forget who Lord Ram actually is—he is a manifestation of the Supreme Being who had assumed the form of a human being with a clear mandate to eliminate the demons who were creating havoc in this creation. The Lord had promised the gods, mother earth and sages that he will personally carry out this job when he takes the form of a prince born as a son of the king of Ayodhya*. This was a work or duty of the Lord that had priority for him; it superseded all other considerations. {*Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 186—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 187; (ii) Doha no. 192; (b) Uttar Kand, (iii) Doha no. 72.}

So therefore, in order to do his duties and fulfill his obligations, Lord Ram was morally bound to forgo physical comforts and head to the forest. The poor Creator was made a scapegoat and blamed only by those who did not know the reality behind what was happening.]

दो०. कैकयनंदिनि मंदमति कठिन कुटिलपनु कीन्ह ।
जेहिं रघुनंदन जानकिहि सुख अवसर दुखु दीन्ह ॥ ९१ ॥

dōhā.

kaikayanandini mandamati kaṭhina kuṭilapanu kīnha.
jēhim raghunandana jānakihi sukha avasara dukhu dīnha. 91.

[Feeling very anguished at the cruelty of Kaikeyi who had no qualms, showed no regrets or even had a sense of guilt for wrong doing by sending Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman to the forest dressed as hermits, Guha Nishad could not suppress his contempt for her, for her evil nature and her ignominious deed. He mused and muttered aloud as follows—]

‘The daughter of the king of Kaikeya (“kaikayanandini”, i.e. Kaikeyi) is of an utterly pervert and wicked mind for she could even think of doing such a nasty and cruel thing as to give so much sorrow, suffering and pain to Lord Ram (“raghunandana”, i.e. the son of the illustrious family of king Raghu) and Sita (“jānakihi”, i.e. the daughter of king Janak) at a time when they should have been enjoying happiness, joy, pleasures and comfort in life¹.’ (Doha no. 91)

[Note—¹Lord Ram and Sita were recently married and were young in age. So, if Kaikeyi hadn't played her dirty game of sending them to the forest, forcing suffering

upon them and compelling them to endure great hardships and troubles in the wilderness of the forest, the couple would have lived happily in the city of Ayodhya, enjoying life and its pleasures. Further, Lord Ram was to become a Prince-Regent, and it was expected that life would have been easy, pleasant and comfortable for both Lord Ram and Sita had everything not been ruined by the wickedness and perversion of Kaikeyi.

A similar idea is expressed in Veda Vyas' "Adhyatma Ramayan", Ayodhya Kand, Canto 6, verse no. 3.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 47; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 48; (iii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 50; (iv) Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 51; (v) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 122.

In all these verses we read about the common refrain of grief, regret and sorrow shown by the people; they blamed the king (Dasrath) and Kaikeyi for all the unfortunate developments as they had been so cruel as to send Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman to the forest for no fault of theirs.

When one is subjected to pain, suffering and grief at a time when they are least expected, when one is preparing oneself for a time of comfort, happiness and joy in the foreseeable future, and instead he is suddenly tossed by fate to suffer and endure immense physical hardships for no apparent fault of his, then the agony arising out of such unexpected suffering, pain and grief becomes very intense, and it hurts the most.

In the present case, Lord Ram and Sita were poised to lead a comfortable life as the Prince-Regent and his consort respectively when all of a sudden they were thrown out of their homes and pushed to the forest. They were born in royal families, and had no experience of hardships; but all of a sudden now they were forced to live like a hermit in the harsh environs of the forest. This sharp contrast between the two ways of life—one in the comfortable palace of a king, surrounded by opulence and all imaginable pleasures and comforts of the material world, and the other as a hermit moving around barefoot in the forest—is very obvious and needs no elaboration.

We ought to take note here of one remarkable thing vis-à-vis Lord Ram's reaction to his being sent to the forest so unceremoniously, that in spite of all the hardships and sufferings that the Lord and his companions, viz. Sita and Laxman, had to endure in the forest, they never complained, got upset or felt unhappy. This was possible because Lord Ram was of a noble heart and exemplary character: the Lord possessed the glorious virtues of having equanimity, maintain an evenness of mind under the greatest of adversities; he practiced fortitude, forbearance, resilience, tolerance and forgiveness; he had self-control over emotions and sense organs, treated everything equally, without getting perturbed or upset about anything or any situation; he was steadfast in keeping vows, pursuing his objectives, and living up to expectations, and he was diligent in upholding the principles of Dharma. He was courageous and bold; detached and dispassionate; treated suffering and joy alike; was immune to worldly temptations; and was not affected or influenced by anything in this gross, mundane, mortal, material world.]

चौ०. भइ दिनकर कुल बिटप कुठारी । कुमति कीन्ह सब बिस्व दुखारी ॥ १ ॥

भयउ बिषादु निषादहि भारी । राम सीय महि सयन निहारी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

bha'i dinakara kula biṭapa kuṭhārī. kumati kīnha saba bisva dukhārī. 1.
bhaya'u biṣādu niṣādahi bhārī. rāma sīya mahi sayana nihārī. 2.

[Deprecating Kaikeyi for her wickedness, and berating her for her pervert nature which made her so ruthless and inconsiderate that she had no regrets in sending the innocent Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman to the forest, Guha Nishad lamented further—]

‘She (i.e. Kaikeyi) became an axe for the tree¹ representing the great and illustrious Solar Race, the race of great kings to which Lord Ram belonged.

Indeed, in all sooth and without gainsay, this pervert woman had caused the whole world to feel sad and extremely despondent by her selfishness and wicked deeds².’ (1)

The sight of Lord Ram and Sita sleeping on the ground filled Nishad with great sadness; he was overcome with anguish and felt very sorry³. (2)

[Note—¹To wit, just like an axe cuts down a tree and leads to its death, Kaikeyi had played the role of a villain who would become so selfish and pervert that he won’t have any compunctions in ruining his own family for some petty gains.

Even the citizens of Ayodhya had used this analogy when they came to learn about the wickedness and mischief of Kaikeyi—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 47.

²Truly indeed, the wicked action of one woman had caused intense grief and pain to the whole of Ayodhya, a great and prosperous kingdom inhabited by otherwise happy and contented people*. Not only them, but thousands of others in far-flung parts of the land through which Lord Ram passed while going to the forest too felt very sad and distressed when they learnt that it was Kaikeyi who had sent the Lord, Sita and Laxman to the forest to satisfy her sadistic whims#.

{Refer—Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand:

*(i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 46—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 47; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precede Doha no. 51; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 57; (iv) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 83—to Doha no. 84 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it; (v) Doha no. 86.

#(i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 118—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 120; (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 122.}

³Refer also to—Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 90 herein above.

In this context, refer also to: Veda Vyas’ “Adhyatma Ramayan”, Ayodhya Kand, Canto 6, verse nos. 1-3.]

बोले लखन मधुर मृदु बानी । ग्यान बिराग भगति रस सानी ॥ ३ ॥

काहु न कोउ सुख दुख कर दाता । निज कृत करम भोग सबु भ्राता ॥ ४ ॥

bōlē lakhana madhura mṛdu bānī. gyāna birāga bhagati rasa sānī. 3.
kāhu na kō'u sukha dukha kara dātā. nija kṛta karama bhōga sabu bhrātā. 4.

[The following verses are regarded as 'Laxman Geeta', or the spiritual and metaphysical philosophy as preached by Laxman for the peace of tormented heart of Guha Nishad.]

Hearing Guha Nishad's lamentations and expression of intense grief, and realizing the anguish of his heart, Laxman decided to comfort his companion and give peace to his tormented heart by speaking words of wisdom that would enlighten Nishad about certain Truths of existence as enunciated in the scriptures.

Thus, Laxman spoke in a very polite manner, and his advice to Nishad was soaked in the philosophy of 'Gyan' (truthful knowledge; wisdom; gnosis), 'Vairagya' (renunciation, dispassion and detachment from all worldly things), and 'Bhakti' (devotion and love for the Lord God) as follows. (3)

Laxman said: 'No one else is responsible for a person's happiness or grief, for all joys and sufferings that come to him as his share are the consequences of a person's own deeds and actions'. (4)

[Note—¹In this context, refer also to: Veda Vyas' "Adhyatma Ramayan", Ayodhya Kand, Canto 6, verse nos. 4-8.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 77; (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 219; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 282.]

जोग बियोग भोग भल मंदा । हित अनहित मध्यम भ्रम फंदा ॥ ५ ॥
जनमु मरनु जहँ लागि जग जालू । संपति बिपति करमु अरु कालू ॥ ६ ॥
धरनि धामु धनु पुर परिवारू । सरगु नरकु जहँ लागि व्यवहारू ॥ ७ ॥
देखिअ सुनिअ गुनिअ मन माही । मोह मूल परमारथु नाही ॥ ८ ॥

jōga biyōga bhōga bhala mandā. hita anahita madhyama bhrama phandā. 5.
janamu maranu jaham' lagi jaga jālū. sampati bipati karamu aru kālū. 6.
dharani dhāmu dhanu pura parivārū. saragu naraku jaham' lagi byavahārū. 7.
dēkhi'a suni'a guni'a mana māhī. mōha mūla paramārathu nāhīm. 8.

All spheres of life in this gross mundane world of transmigration, and all situations and circumstances that directly or indirectly affect a creature, such as meeting someone or separation from someone, all sorts of material comforts and enjoyments on the one hand, and sufferings and grief on the other hand, all developments that one regards as being very favourable, and the opposite situation of things that are regarded as being very unfavourable, and all situations betwixt these two extremes—verily indeed, they are all nothing but delusory in nature, and a sort of trap laid out by Maya (the overriding phenomenon of 'delusions' that spares no one in this creation) to mislead a creature (into thinking that he is suffering or enjoying, that one situation is fortunate and the other is unfortunate, etc.). (5)

[Listing some of the many aspects of creation that impact the wisdom of the living being and cause delusion in his mind, creating a sense of either joy or grief that actually should not be there if the creature is wise, enlightened and self-realised, Laxman said—] Such factors as (i) birth and death (and their accompanying joy and grief respectively) that dominate this gross world as far as it stretches (i.e. the entire gross world comes under the ambit of ‘birth’ and ‘death’: everything in it is born or created one day, and dies or is destroyed some other day, and there is no exception to this rule), (ii) good fortunes such as wealth and prosperity on the one hand, and misfortunes such as poverty and deprivations on the other hand, (iii) other factors such as Karma (fate that compels a creature to do some thing), (iv) Kaal (circumstances, either good and favourable, or bad and unfavourable) --- (6)

--- Land (immovable assets such real estate and dominions), one’s home, wealth, homeland or native place (city, town, village etc.), family and relations (friends, companions, kith and kin), heaven and hell, and all other aspect of creation as well as sphere of life in this gross world, as far as it stretches and as much as is known about it— (7)

Verily indeed, all of them are nothing but delusions created by the influence of Maya (i.e. they appear to be real and true, but actually they are not).¹ (8)

[Note—¹What Laxman has told Guha Nishad in the aforesaid verses, as well as in the verses that follow herein below, form the basic principles of metaphysics and spiritual philosophy, and they have also been enunciated and explained in Veda Vyas’ “Adhyatma Ramayan”, Ayodhya Kand, Canto 6, verse nos. 9-15.

Further, a similar reading is found in Padma Puran, Bhumi Khand, where Yayaati also expresses a similar idea in relation to a person and deeds done by him.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Kishkindha Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 18 that precedes Doha no. 7; (b) Uttar Kand, (ii) Doha no. 43—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 44.

The concept of ‘Maya’ and its various manifestations or aspects, and how they create delusions to trap the creature, have been described in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 70—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 72; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 117—to Doha no. 118.]

दो०. सपनें होइ भिखारि नृपु रंकु नाकपति होइ ।

जागें लाभु न हानि कछु तिमि प्रपंच जियँ जोइ ॥ ९२ ॥

dōhā.

sapanēm hō'i bhikhāri nṛpu raṅku nākapati hō'i.

jāgēm lābhu na hāni kachu timi prapañca jiyam̐ jō'i. 92.

Just like a pauper being appointed as a king, or Indra, the king of gods, becoming a pauper in the world of dreams mean nothing in reality, as this illusion would vanish as soon as the dream itself ends and the person wakes up in the real world, so exactly is the case with whatever is seen or experienced or witnessed by a person in this gross material world, because all such things are illusionary and false by their basic nature,

they have no real substance or pith in them, for they last only till the time this world lasts, and they vanish no sooner than the world itself ceases to exist (for a person who is self-realised, wise and enlightened).

[To wit, a wise, enlightened, erudite and sagacious person will remain uninfluenced by the world, for he knows it is illusionary, and therefore he will practice detachment, dispassion and renunciation as he realizes the delusory nature of the material world. Except for such enlightened souls, for the rest of the creatures the world is a huge cauldron of either the feeling of joy, pleasure, comfort and happiness, or of sorrows, pain, grief and agonies that keep them on their toes, while robbing them of peace, stability and real happiness in their lives.]¹ (Doha no. 92)

[Note—¹A similar idea with a different example is found in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 118. Here the example of a person having his head cut-off in his dreams is cited. He gets upset and terrified when he experiences the pain of his head being chopped off by some enemy in his dreams, but as soon as he wakes up he realizes that everything was false, and this realization makes him feel very happy that he has not lost his head! Here it is said that in a similar way, the world is like that dream that caused so much grief to the man who had a vision of his head being chopped-off in it, for all its pains, sorrows, grief and agonies of this world are felt by a person who does not know the truth about it.

This idea has been clarified in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 112 also, where another instance of a man who erroneously thinks that a length of rope is a snake, which in turn makes him terribly frightened. But no sooner he realizes that he was mistaken, but all his fears vanish.

To wit, only a wise and enlightened person understands that the world he sees is gross and perishable in nature, and therefore all its material things and experiences too perish and vanish when the world ceases to exist. Anything that is temporary and changeable is definitely 'not True', for 'Truth' is a universal, constant, uniform and eternal factor. So therefore, the world and everything in it is 'false', simply because it is 'not true'. Hence, to be perturbed by anything or any situation in this world that seems to be adverse or unfavourable, and feel elated at another that seems to be desirable or favourable is literally being taken for a ride by the great power of 'Maya'—i.e. the mystical power of Nature that creates the smokescreen of delusions.

Even as a pauper who had dreamt of being a king in his dreams realizes upon awaking that the truth is different in the real world than what he had experienced a while ago, and he is no king in the real sense, so does a wise and enlightened person realizes that whatever he sees and experiences around him in this gross world is false, and not the reality. Hence, he is undisturbed or uninfluenced by the sights or experiences of the gross material world because he knows them to be transient and illusionary in nature. This enlightened and wise view of the material world makes a sagacious and learned person become dispassionate towards and remain detached from the material world with its myriad sights and experiences that could have otherwise given him a lot of vexations.

Briefly, this gross world and its countless charms or sufferings are like a dream that is here now and gone the next moment. Only a fool would allow himself to be moved by them, to be influenced by the world and its experiences; a wise, sagacious and erudite person would just smile and shrug his shoulders; he would remain calm and quiet, without getting perturbed or disturbed in the least about anything related to this world.]

चौ०. अस बिचारि नहिं कीजिअ रोसू । काहुहि बादि न देइअ दोसू ॥ १ ॥

मोह निसाँ सबु सोवनिहारा । देखिअ सपन अनेक प्रकारा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

asa bicāri nahim̐ kīji'a rōsū. kāhuhi bādi na dē'i'a dōsū. 1.

mōha nisām̐ sabu sōvanihārā. dēkhi'a sapana anēka prakārā. 2.

You must not grieve by keeping in mind that this world is like a great delusion, and sufferings or joys in it are only imaginary. Therefore, you should neither be angry at anyone nor blame anyone for anything or any misfortune in this world. (1)

Everyone appears to be sleeping in a night symbolized by delusions, and during this sleep they have dreams that though seem to be so true but are simply imaginary by their very nature.¹ (2)

[Note—¹During the point of time when a person is dreaming in his sleep, he thinks that it is a real world for him. For instance, if he dreams of being a beggar or a king, then for those moments when he so dreams he does become a beggar or a king and behaves like one. But as soon as he wakes up he suddenly realizes that all that was a 'mere dream', i.e. it was false. Similarly, for a wise man this mortal and gross world is merely a dream which would end one day. So he focuses on understanding the reality of life that transcends this mundane existence. This 'reality' is the Truth that a wise man seeks. And this 'Truth' is known as Atma, the pure Consciousness that is different from the gross physical body of the person, and it is an eternal entity; it is knowledgeable and bliss personified. So therefore, where is the cause of grief and sorrow and suffering in such an entity?]

एहिं जग जामिनि जागहिं जोगी । परमारथी प्रपंच बियोगी ॥ ३ ॥

जानिअ तबहिं जीव जग जागा । जब सब बिषय बिलास बिरागा ॥ ४ ॥

ēhim̐ jaga jāmini jāgahim̐ jōgī. paramārathī prapañca biyōgī. 3.

jāni'a tabahim̐ jīva jaga jāgā. jaba saba biṣaya bilāsa birāgā. 4.

In this gross world which is like a night of darkness (delusions), only ascetics and mystics who are wise, self-realised, detached from the world and its sensual charms, those who long to attain the ultimate Truth and endeavour to reach the final destination that would provide the with liberation and deliverance from mundane existence, are the ones who are deemed to be wide awake and free from the fear of darkness that horrify ordinary creatures in this world. (3)

Verily indeed, a creature should be regarded as being 'truly awake' in this symbolic night of delusions in this world only if he is totally free from any attachment with this world, if he has exemplary renunciation in him and is not at all tempted by any of the sensual charms of this gross mundane world, and if he is not interested in gratifying his sense organs. (4)

होइ बिबेकु मोह भ्रम भागा । तब रघुनाथ चरन अनुरागा ॥ ५ ॥
सखा परम परमारथु एहू । मन क्रम बचन राम पद नेहू ॥ ६ ॥

hō'i bibēku mōha bhrama bhāgā. taba raghunātha carana anurāgā. 5.
sakhā parama paramārathu ēhū. mana krama bacana rāma pada nēhū. 6.

As soon as one develops true spiritual wisdom, delusions and ignorance run away. And as soon as delusions are eliminated, one develops affection and love for the holy feet of Lord Ram (Lord Raghunath). (5)

Oh friend! The best way to attain one's spiritual goal in life is to have undiluted and sincere love and affection on the holy feet of Lord Ram by one's mind and heart (i.e. by one's thoughts and emotions), by one's actions and deeds, and by one's words (spoken or written). In all sooth, this is the best form of spiritually meritorious life that one can lead¹. (6)

[Note—¹This verse emphasizes that the *best thing* to do for one's spiritual welfare is to have unwavering and the purest form of devotion and affection for the holy feet of Lord Ram—i.e. to serve the Lord and have full faith in him. All the faculties of a man, such as his Mana (mind and heart), his Karma (deeds and actions), and his Bachan (words) should be directed towards this end.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 107; (ii) Doha no. 129 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede it; (b) Uttar Kand, (iii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 45; (iv) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 95; (v) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 127.]

राम ब्रह्म परमारथ रूपा । अबिगत अलख अनादि अनूपा ॥ ७ ॥
सकल बिकार रहित गतभेदा । कहि नित नेति निरूपहिं बेदा ॥ ८ ॥

rāma brahma paramāratha rūpā. abigata alakha anādi anūpā. 7.
sakala bikāra rahita gatabhēdā. kahi nita nēti nirūpahīṁ bēdā. 8.

Verily indeed, Lord Ram is a personified form of the supreme Brahm, the Supreme Being and the Lord of the world¹. The Lord is a personified form of the ultimate Truth in creation, and the only spiritual destination for the soul.

The Lord is beyond comprehension of the sense organs of a creature (abigata); his true form is invisible to the gross eye of the creature's body as the Lord's essential form is extremely subtle and sublime (alakha). He is without an end (anādi), without any comparison and parallel (anūpā), free from all faults and taints (sakala bikāra rahita), and of an immutable and indivisible form (gatabhēdā).

The Vedas have constantly and consistently used the term 'Neti-Neti' to refer to the Lord². [The term 'Neti-Neti' means neither this nor that. To wit, this means that nothing can ever sufficiently describe the Lord in entirety. All the terms used to indicate any given quality of the Lord are correct, but none of them can be a definite indication of the Lord's glory as the glory of the Lord goes much beyond the scope of any given word or group of words.] (7-8)

[Note—¹The fact that Lord Ram was none else but Brahm, the Supreme Being or the cosmic Consciousness, personified has been reiterated at many places in Ram Charit Manas. Some of the instances are the following:-

(a) Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 12 along with Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that follow it; (ii) Doha no. 51 along with Chanda line no. 3 that precedes it; (iii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 108; (iv) Chaupai line nos. 5-6, 8 that precede Doha no. 116; (v) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 118; (vi) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 119; (vii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 120; (viii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 121; (ix) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 150; (x) Chanda line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 186;

(b) Ayodhya Kand, (xi) Doha no. 87; (xii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 93;

(c) Lanka Kand, (xiii) Doha no. 14—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 15; (xiv) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 110;

(d) Uttar Kand, (xv) Chanda line no. 21 that precedes Doha no. 13; (xvi) Doha no. 47; (xvii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 48; (xviii) Doha no. 85-a.

²Neti-Neti = The phrase *Neti-Neti* literally means ‘not this-not this’ or ‘neither this nor that’. This is used as a standard by the Vedas to describe the concept of Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness. It first describes what is known as the supreme transcendental Brahm, and then goes on to negate each of these attributes of Brahm in order to establish the fact that Brahm is such a mysterious, enigmatic and esoteric divine Authority that it cannot be delineated or specified by any one or the other epithet used to describe it; Brahm cannot be butted and bounded within the limitations of words, for it transcends all knowledge and ways of expression. Brahm is an all-inclusive, all-encompassing and all-incorporating Divinity, so none of its grand attributes or virtues can be excluded or relegated to the background by emphasising one or more specific attributes or virtues as being more prominent or important or significant than the other.

The Vedas, which are not only repositories of all knowledge pertaining to the field of spiritualism, metaphysics and theology, as well as secular, but also expertly expounded and narrated in immaculate grammar and language which gives them the ability to elucidate clearly and proficiently upon even the most complex and esoteric of concepts and philosophies pertaining to creation and its varied mysteries, as well as on the subject of metaphysics, theology and spiritualism, have however failed to describe the Supreme Being in entirety. So after countless attempts and many ways to try to present a comprehensive picture of the Lord and describe who he is, they finally surrendered by acknowledging their limitations in this regard by declaring “Neti-Neti”, meaning literally ‘not this-not this, or ‘it is neither this nor that’. To wit, the Vedas say that the many things they have proposed and expounded upon with respect to understanding the nature and form and character and qualities and virtues of the Supreme Being are all only a fraction of the Great Truth, but while they are correct and true within their limited sphere of meaning, yet they do not mean to be an exhaustive, exclusive and comprehensive narration of the nature of the Lord, for much is left to be said and known which is beyond our ability.

Brahm is an entity that goes beyond the imagination of the mind. All descriptions, all narratives and all adjectives use words, and these words are totally incompetent, inapt and insufficient to describe something or some entity that goes far beyond the wildest of imaginations of the man. The phrase ‘Neti-Neti’ imply that it is

not possible to either describe the attributes of qualities of Brahm conclusively or fully understand and comprehend Brahm in entirety by the use of words, because Brahm is an esoteric and mystical Being who cannot be limited to or be delineated by words that have their own limitations; the words cannot restrict an unrestricted entity within the parameter of their meanings, connotations and interpretations. So therefore, whatever is known and understood about Brahm with the use of words is just an idea of who or what Brahm is, and it should not be taken as comprehensive or exclusive definition or description of Brahm, for there are many other things or aspects of Brahm that these words do not cover.

Now, this supreme Brahm is said to be manifested as the divine Atma or pure consciousness of the creature and lives as such not only in the creature's bosom but everywhere else in this creation, both in the visible as well as the invisible spectrum, right from the minuscule to the most colossus. In the following verses this Brahm in the form of the Atma is being described by the process of negation, or 'Neti Neti', which is the standard adopted by the Vedas. This is a unique approach to say something authoritatively and conclusively about an entity to prove its authenticity and truthfulness by eliminating all possible individual ways in which it is usually perceived to be in existence to emphasise the point that the entity being described is much beyond the limited scope and periphery of that particular description or adjective. Words cannot define Divinity and ethereal concepts. At the most each epithet or honour that is given to this divine entity deals with one or the other facet of that wholesome entity, but it is a very narrow view of something that needs a holistic and 360° approach to be fully understood.

Besides this point, Brahm is an entity that defies conventional ways of understanding anything, ways which are the standard norm in analyzing a thing in an empirical and logical fashion in this world. There are certain aspects of life that cannot be contained in a glass vessel to be displayed to students in a laboratory of a college. These things cannot be explained in literal words; they cannot be physically demonstrated to prove that they are indeed a reality and not a figment of mere imagination.

Brahm is one such mysterious, enigmatic and esoteric Supreme Being who is best understood by first eliminating all possible criterions normally employed to define and judge anything in this world because all the logics and arguments just aren't sufficient and potent enough instruments to completely and wholesomely describe Brahm, and then realise the latter's presence and existence by the best method to know him, and it is 'experience and witnessing him first hand in this entire creation'. It is easy said than done. This is the miracle of 'Advaita Vedanta' which says in essence that everything in this creation is Brahm and nothing but Brahm. It appears on the face of it that this axiom implies that even 'falsehood' is Brahm. It is not the case, because anything that is '*not truth*' is *not* Brahm, and falsehood is 'non-truth'!

The Vedas declared that they are incapable to enumerate all the majestic glories and mystical qualities of Brahm, the Supreme Being, and therefore what they say of the Lord is just indicative of his divinity and holiness, but not an exhaustive account of it. No one should be foolish enough to conclude that the words of praise for the Lord by the Vedas are complete in themselves because there is much more to the Lord than what the Vedas or any other scriptures manage to say about him.

The scriptures tried their best to enumerate and define the glories, the greatness and the majesty of Brahm, but no matter how hard they tried they found that whatever they said was like just scratching on the surface of the Lord's stupendity and

profoundness. They discovered that their utterances were utterly insufficient to describe even a fraction of the Lord's cosmic majesty and astounding glories. So they surrendered and concluded that all they managed to say of the Lord is not the entire truth about the Lord but only an indication of what the Lord actually is.

Therefore, the phrase "Neti-Neti" means that all the glories that the Vedas narrate about the Lord are just indicative in nature of how great and majestic the Lord is, but they are not exhaustive in themselves, as much more is to be said of the Lord which even these Vedas do not know about.

It would be highly mistaken for anyone to think that since the Vedas are repository of wisdom and knowledge hence their utterances about the Lord God are exhaustive in nature, for they fail to realise that the same Vedas have declared their limitations about the knowledge of the Lord by saying "Neti-Neti". What the Vedas say of the Lord is like the tip of the iceberg, for much remains to be said and known about the Lord which the Vedas aren't capable of.

This process of establishing the greatness and magnificence of Brahm as a halloed Divinity which is not to be restricted to and bound in words has been very cleverly and marvellously described in *Tejobindu Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, Cantos 4-5 and verse nos. 1-29 of Canto 6. This particular Upanishad is like the crown-jewel in the crown of Advita Vedanta. Refer also to *Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad* of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, 2/3/6, 4/2/4, 4/4/32.

Some selected references of the concept of 'Neti-Neti' with reference to Brahm are to be found in the following Upanishads—(a) Shukla Yajur Veda's Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, 2/3/6, 4/2/4, 4/4/32. (b) Krishna Yajur Veda's Tejobindu Upanishad, Cantos 4-5, and verse nos. 1-29 of Canto 6; Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 68.

In the context of the concept of the phrase 'Neti-Neti', refer to: Ram Charit Manas:-

(a) Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 12; (ii) Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 51; (iii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 203; (iii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 216; (iv) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 341;

(b) Ayodhya Kand, (v) Sortha no. 126;

(c) Aranya Kand, (vi) Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 27;

(d) Kishkindha Kand, (vii) Chanda line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 10;

(e) Lanka Kand, (viii) Doha no. 117-a;

(f) Uttar Kand, (ix) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 124; and (x) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 216.]

दो०. भगत भूमि भूसुर सुरभि सुर हित लागि कृपाल ।

करत चरित धरि मनुज तनु सुनत मिटहिं जग जाल ॥ ९३ ॥

dōhā.

bhagata bhūmi bhūsura surabhi sura hita lāgi kṛpāla.

karata carita dhari manuja tanu sunata miṭahim̐ jaga jāla. 93.

That same Supreme Lord of the world has adopted the form of a human being in the body of Lord Ram for the welfare of his devotees, mother earth and its inhabitants, Brahmins or elders and wise members of the society, as well as for the Gods in

heaven¹. [All of them were tormented by evil forces in this world, so the Lord came down to eliminate such forces and restore the rule of law in this world.]

In his human form, the Lord does so many things. By hearing about his deeds and his divine life, a creature is able free himself from the snares of this delusory world. (Doha no. 93)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 13; (ii) Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 51; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 121; (iv) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 144; (v) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 150; (vi) Doha no. 186—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 187; (vii) Doha no. 192; (viii) Doha no. 205; (b) Ayodhya Kand, (ix) Doha no. 87; (x) (c) Kishkindha Kand, (x) Doha no. 26.

The above discourse of Laxman* made to comfort Guha Nishad and dispel his grief when the latter was very distressed by seeing Lord Ram and Sita sleeping on hard ground under the shade of a tree, is called ‘Laxman Geeta’, for it expounds upon the reality of who Lord Ram was, and succinctly narrates the metaphysical and spiritual philosophy as enunciated by Laxman. {*Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 90—to Doha no. 93.}]

[PAUSE 15 FOR A THIRTY-DAY RECITATION]

चौ०. सखा समुझि अस परिहरि मोहू । सिय रघुबीर चरन रत होहू ॥ १ ॥
कहत राम गुन भा भिनुसारा । जागे जग मंगल सुखदारा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sakhā samujhi asa parihari mōhū. siya raghubīra carana rata hōhū. 1.
kahata rāma guna bhā bhinusārā. jāgē jaga maṅgala sukhadārā. 2.

Laxman concluded his advice to Guha Nishad by telling him: ‘My dear friend (sakhā), keeping in mind what I have advised you, you ought to shun delusions, you ought not to be moved by unwarranted emotions, for they would make you lose your peace of mind, and do nothing except making you perturbed.

Instead of it, you ought to develop a deep sense of devotion for Lord Ram (“raghubīra”), and be committed to serve the Lord’s holy feet faithfully (as it would grant eternal peace to your mind as well as your soul)¹.’ (1)

The night was well spent by Laxman and Guha as they talked about and discussed the glories and various aspects of the divinity of Lord Ram.

Soon it was dawn, and Lord Ram, who bestows happiness and auspiciousness to the whole world, woke up. (2)

[Note—¹In this context, refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 129; (b) Uttar Kand, (ii) line no. 2 of Doha no. 61; (iii) Doha no. 62; (iv) Doha no. 78-a; (v) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 96.

This devotion for Lord Ram's holy feet is regarded as the best of all spiritual paths or endeavours that lead to emancipation and salvation, to beatitude and attainment of eternal bliss, the supreme achievement for a soul; it is called 'Kaivalya Pada'—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 119.]

सकल सौच करि राम नहावा । सुचि सुजान बट छीर मगावा ॥ ३ ॥
अनुज सहित सिर जटा बनाए । देखि सुमंत्र नयन जल छाए ॥ ४ ॥

sakala sauca kari rāma nahāvā. suci sujāna baṭa chīra magāvā. 3.
anuja sahita sira jaṭā banā'ē. dēkhi sumantra nayana jala chā'ē. 4.

After waking up, Lord Ram performed his routine daily purification chores, did his ablutions and took a bath. Then he sent for some milk or sap of the banyan tree (baṭa chīra)¹. (3)

With this sap, the Lord and his brother (Laxman) made a girdle of hairs on their heads. [To wit, the two brothers applied this sticky sap on the long strands of hairs on their heads, then coiled them and wound them in circles to form a sort of a crown of matted hairs over their heads. This is called a "jaṭā".]

When Sumantra saw the Lord doing it, his eyes were filled with tears (as this sight made him feel extremely sad, hurt and despondent—for it was too much for him to bear with the grief of being a witness to his beloved Lord Ram determined to become a hermit by making a crown of matted hairs on his head, the feature that would complete the Lord's attire as a hermit, right before Sumantra's eyes, and the latter felt utterly dismayed and distressed as he was unable to prevent this from happening). (4)

[Note—¹In this context, refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 226 along with Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it, where we read that Lord Ram woke up in the morning and did his daily purification chores in Janakpur before he went out to fetch flowers that were to be used by sage Vishwamitra for his worship rituals.

Indeed it is such a mystery that Lord Ram who himself is the Supreme Being, and whose feet are so holy and divine that wherever the Lord goes that place itself becomes worthy of great honour and regarded as being very fortunate*, would have to clean himself and undergo purifications chores. {*Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 122; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 136; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 248.}

This is because Lord Ram acted his role as a human being to perfection—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 87.]

हृदयँ दाहु अति बदन मलीना । कह कर जोरि बचन अति दीना ॥ ५ ॥
नाथ कहेउ अस कोसलनाथा । लै रथु जाहु राम कें साथी ॥ ६ ॥
बनु देखाइ सुरसरि अन्हवाई । आनेहु फेरि बेगि दोउ भाई ॥ ७ ॥

लखनु रामु सिय आनेहु फेरी । संसय सकल सँकोच निबेरी ॥ ८ ॥

hṛdayam² dāhu ati badana malīnā. kaha kara jōri bacana ati dīnā. 5.
nātha kahē'u asa kōsalanāthā. lai rathu jāhu rāma kēm sāthā. 6.
banu dēkhā'i surasari anhavā'ī. ānēhu phēri bēgi dō'u bhā'ī. 7.
lakhanu rāmu siya ānēhu phērī. sansaya sakala samkōca nibērī. 8.

His (Sumantra's) heart burnt and felt tormented by excess of grief and agony, while his body became pale and face doleful as he was feeling very miserable.

He joined the palms of his hands in a prayerful mode, and spoke piteously with a very distressed tone. (5)

Sumantra told Lord Ram: 'Oh Lord, the king of Ayodhya ("kōsalanāthā"; king Dasrath) had instructed me as follows, "Take a chariot and go with Lord Ram. (6)

Take him to some distance and show him around the forest, make him take a bath in the river Ganges, and then bring him back¹. (7)

[Dasrath told me—] Bring Laxman, Lord Ram and Sita back anyhow by setting to rest any doubts and scruples that they might have². (8)

[Note—¹Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 81 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it.

²To wit, Sumantra meant that king Dasrath had told him to convince Lord Ram that this method would help the Lord fulfill his father's words without any trace of doubt—for he would have gone to the forest to honour his father's words in the first instance, and then he would also be doing the right thing by coming back to Ayodhya as this was also the order of his father. So therefore, Lord Ram should not hesitate to return as it was his father's express instructions, and further, the Lord would not be violating any principles of Dharma for breaking his father's words because actually he would be obeying them.

Come to think of it: then why did Lord Ram not return; why did the Lord not heed Sumantra's pleas? The answer is not far to be found—it is because though everything else was fine, yet one thing did not fit in its place, and it was that Kaikeyi had taken Dasrath's words that Lord Ram would be banished to the forest for 'fourteen years': apropos—Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 29.

Today was only the second day out of Ayodhya, so this condition of 'fourteen years in the forest' was not met at all. Remember: while everyone concerned was emotionally disturbed during the episode of Lord Ram's going to the forest, the Lord himself however was the only one who maintained his mental balance, and remained calm and poise, for the Lord was not at all disturbed or perturbed by the developments—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 41.

So therefore, the Lord could think coherently, he could apply his mind and use his wisdom to act rightly, and not according to emotions and sentimental influences. He decided that if he went back now, it would be clear violation of the mandate of

living for fourteen years in the forest. Hence, Lord Ram quietly refused to return home.

Besides this, there were other greater issues at stake: he had to eliminate the scourge of the demons on the one hand, and on the other hand he had to bless countless sages, hermits and ascetics as well as ordinary creatures living in far flung parts of the land by visiting them, for they had been waiting for this good fortunes for a long time. All this was not possible if the Lord returned right away.

Another point that deterred Lord Ram from returning home was the vehement way in which Kaikeyi was sure to react; there were all chances of her doing something more horrible and ignominious that would cause a greater scandal than sending Lord Ram to the forest—for she has already threatened to commit suicide if the Lord did not go to the forest for fourteen years, and has used this threat as a tool to force her husband, king Dasrath, to surrender before her wishes and send the Lord to the forest most against his own wishes: apropos—Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 33.

Lord Ram had a hunch that when Kaikeyi had seen Sumantra going on a chariot after the Lord, she would have guessed that the chief minister was going forth to bring the Lord back, and as this possibility would have upset her plans, it was quite natural to believe that she was by now mad with anger. She was sure to have rushed to the highest point on the terrace of the palace to keep a hawk's eye on the road leading out of the city, spying on every movement on it. So therefore, no sooner she espied that the Lord was returning home, but she would raise hell and throw a mighty tantrum, pulling out her hairs and running amok in the palace, yelling and jumping mad with vengeance, and may be jump-off the balcony to commit suicide even before the Lord could even step off the chariot! Lord Ram did not wish that to happen; it would be a grave scandal.]

दो०. नृप अस कहैउ गोसाईं जस कहइ करौं बलि सोइ ।
करि बिनती पायन्ह परेउ दीन्ह बाल जिमि रोइ ॥ ९४ ॥

dōhā.

nṛpa asa kahē'u gōsā'im̐ jasa kaha'i karaum bali sō'i.
kari binatī pāyanha parē'u dīnha bāla jimi rō'i. 94.

'My Lord', said Sumantra, 'This is what the king (Dasrath) has ordered me to do. Now, I beg thee to please tell me what am I to do, for I shalt do what thou order me to do.'

Saying this, Sumantra fell down at the feet of Lord Ram and wept bitterly like a child¹. (Doha no. 94)

[Note—¹Sumantra could no longer contain his grief and sorrow. He fell down helplessly at the feet of Lord Ram to express his excess of pain and sadness. He had no more words to say; he was choked with emotions and his heart was all but bursting with agony.

Another reason why Sumantra fell at the feet of Lord Ram was that it was the best way to evoke mercy and pity in the heart of the Lord, which in turn might make him reconsider his decision to proceed to the forest. Sumantra concluded that it was not the time to argue and use persuasion in an attempt to make Lord Ram return

home; yet by making it clear that he is feeling completely helpless, distraught and shaken by falling at the Lord's feet in abject despair, as if he was seeking mercy and forgiveness, and then weeping like a child, it was quite possible that it might make the Lord change his mind.]

चौ०. तात कृपा करि कीजिअ सोई । जातें अवध अनाथ न होई ॥ १ ॥

मंत्रिहि राम उठाइ प्रबोधा । तात धरम मतु तुम्ह सबु सोधा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

tāta kṛpā kari kīji'a sōī. jātēm avadha anātha na hōī. 1.

mantrihi rāma uṭhā'i prabōdhā. tāta dharama matu tumha sabu sōdhā. 2.

[Sumantra pleaded with Lord Ram with an emotionally choked voice—]

‘Oh my dear Lord (tāta)! Please be kind to do that which would prevent Ayodhya from being left without a Master or a Guardian (avadha anātha na hōī)¹. [What more can I say Lord; I am too bewildered and confounded to even think of anything coherently. My mind is utterly confused, and my heart sinks under the weight of grief and sadness that has overwhelmed me. I am lost for words to express my emotions fully, but I still gather courage to plead with thee to please be kind and merciful upon me, as well as have grace upon the rest of the citizens of Ayodhya.] (1)

Lord Ram lifted the minister courteously and comforted him. The Lord said: ‘My dear (tāta)! You are wise, intelligent, sagacious and erudite; you are well-versed in the principles of Dharma, and deeply understand them. [So, I need not say much to you in this respect, as you are already aware of what is the proper thing to do and what is not.] (2)

[Note—¹Sumantra pleaded with Lord Ram: “Oh Lord, the citizens of Ayodhya love thee very much; they treat thee as their only Guardian-angel and their only Lord and Master in this world. So therefore, imagine their pitiful life without thee; Lord, have pity on them. Oh merciful Lord, be considerate, and please do something that would not make the citizens of Ayodhya feel orphaned, for without thee the people as well as the kingdom would effectively be rendered helpless, without anyone to act as a guardian to take care of them, just like a kingdom is without a king, a large family is without a father, or a ship is without a captain.”

In this context, refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 29; (ii) Doha no. 46 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 51; (iv) Chaupai line nos. 3, 5-8 that precede Doha no. 83—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 84.]

सिबि दधीच हरिचंद नरेसा । सहे धरम हित कोटि कलेसा ॥ ३ ॥

रंतिदेव बलि भूप सुजाना । धरमु धरेउ सहि संकट नाना ॥ ४ ॥

sibi dadhīca haricanda narēsā. sahē dharama hita kōṭi kalēsā. 3.
rantidēva bali bhūpa sujānā. dharamu dharē'u sahi saṅkaṭa nānā. 4.

The great kings Sibi, Dadhichi and Harischandra¹ had endured great sufferings and sacrificed a lot in order to uphold the principles of Dharma (i.e. the virtuous way of life). (3)

Similarly, kings Rantidev² and Bali³ too had suffered various kinds of hardships for the sake of Dharma and in following its principles of right conduct. (4)

[Note—¹Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 30; (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 48.

The stories of Sibi (also pronounced as Shibi) and Dadhichi are narrated in detail as notes appended to Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 30, while that of Harischandra to Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 48.

²The story of king Rantidev is narrated in Srimad Bhagvad Mahapurāṇ, Skandha 9, Chapter 21. It is as follows:

King Rantidev was the son of king Sankriti belonging to the race of illustrious kings descending from king Bharat, the son of the ancient king Dushyant. He was exceptionally charitable by nature, and willingly gave away whatever he possessed to those who were in need. He never yearned for worldly riches, and whatever came his way due to good fortune or favourable fate was acceptable for him, and this also he would cheerfully give away as alms when anyone sought it. Thus, he never hankered after worldly temptations, and practiced exemplary renunciation, detachment and dispassion towards all material things and their charms in this mundane world. He not only practiced such austerity himself, but also ensured that his family, i.e. his wife and his son, too followed his example.

This sort of austere life, surviving on just the bare necessities of life, made their bodies weak and emaciated; they were reduced to mere skeletons. It came to such a pass that on one occasion he and his family had to starve continuously for 48 days as they neither had water to drink, nor any kind of food to eat, so much so that this prolonged starvation made the family fall unconscious and lie on the ground, counting the hours and not knowing how long will they live.

However, on the 49th day in the morning, he got some viands to eat, such as rice-pudding (i.e. a sweet prepared by boiling rice in sweetened milk), some other sweet dish made from sugar and wheat flour, as well as water. Rantidev was just getting ready to share it with his hungry family when a Brahmin guest arrived; so he offered the food to the guest. After the Brahmin ate and left, Rantidev was just getting ready to share with his family whatever food was leftover when another guest arrived, this time a low-caste person known as Shudra. Rantidev gave this Shudra enough food to eat, and after the latter left, another lowly person arrived with a dog in tow, telling the king (Rantidev) that both of them, he and his dog were hungry, and asked the king to feed them. Rantidev gave whatever was left of the food to them, nothing being left for the king and his starving family.

Rantidev believed that every living being is an image of the Supreme Lord, and therefore by offering the food to his guests, whether he was a Brahmin, a Shudra, a lowly person, or a dog, he (Rantidev) was actually offering his oblations to the

Supreme Being who had obliged him by personally coming to visit him in the guise of these guests.

Finally, only a little water was left that was barely enough to quench the thirst of a single person. He was just getting ready to drink this left-over remnant of water when a Chandala (a outcaste person) arrived, begging Rantidev to give the water to him as he was very thirsty. The king gave this little remaining water to the Chandala.

Actually, the Trinity Gods, i.e. Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer and protector, and Shiva the concluder of creation, had wished to test the integrity, honesty and the exemplary character of king Rantidev, so they had personally visited him in the form of the different guests mentioned herein. These Trinity Gods wanted to ascertain the truth of the king's noble character, his charitable nature, his steadfastness in practicing the principles of renunciation, dispassion and detachment, and the firmness of his belief that every living being is a form of the same Supreme Being.

No sooner had the Trinity Gods appeared before king Rantidev, his wife and son, and blessed them, than the three left their mortal coils (i.e. they died) to find eternal deliverance from the cycle of transmigration; the three attained emancipation and salvation; they got eternal beatitude, bliss and felicity.

³The story of king Bali has been narrated as a note appended to Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 30.]

धरमु न दूसर सत्य समाना । आगम निगम पुरान बखाना ॥ ५ ॥

मैं सोइ धरमु सुलभ करि पावा । तजें तिहूँ पुर अपजसु छावा ॥ ६ ॥

dharamu na dūsara satya samānā. āgama nigama purāna bakhānā. 5.
mair̥m sō'i dharamu sulabha kari pāvā. tajēm̐ tihūm̐ pura apajasu chāvā. 6.

Verily indeed, in all sooth, and without gainsay, there is no other principle of Dharma that is more sacrosanct than following the path of Truth¹. This is what the Aagams, the Nigams and the Purans (i.e. the Vedas and ancient scriptures) declare. (5)

If I am able to act in a way that upholds the sanctity of Dharma, if I can walk on the path of Truth and practice noble conduct in my life (by as simple a method as obeying my father's words given to Kaikeyi—that I must live in the forest as a hermit for just fourteen years of my life, and nothing else, which of course is not a big deal as it does not entail much of a problem for me, and neither does it put me to any extended period of sufferings other than the limited time-frame of mere fourteen years, which would fly past very soon), than all the rewards that come to a person by adhering to Dharma would come to me very easily, without much effort on my part.

On the other hand, if I act to the contrary, it wouldst give me nothing but ignominy and a bad name which I wouldst never be able to erase in my life². (6)

[Note—¹Refer also to: (a) Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 28; (b) Valmiki's Ramayana, Ayodhya Kand, Canto 14, verse no. 7; Canto 109, verse nos. 12-14.

²Lord Ram's mother Kaushalya has endorsed this view—when she told him that ‘obeying one's father is the best sort of Dharma one can practice’—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 55.

Sage Vasistha too has reiterated that even king Dasrath had preferred to die rather than break his words of honour which compelled Lord Ram to go to the forest, resulting in the death of his father due to excess of shock and grief. The sage has also advised Bharat to obey his father's command to accept the crown during the period Lord Ram was in the forest. Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 174.

The importance of living a life in accordance to the principles of Dharma that lays stress on righteousness and nobility conduct and thought has been emphasized by Bharat too in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 179.

Earlier, Lord Ram himself has stated that it will be a matter of honour for him to go to the forest to respect his father's words—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 41—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 42.

Lord Ram told Sumantra: “My dear chief minister. Please become calm and not let thee be driven by emotions; kindly understand the gravity of the situation. I havest just cited before thee some selected instances of great kings who art so much honoured and praised in history precisely because they hadst endured great hardships in order to live in accordance with the principles they held dear to their hearts. Not everyone is remembered by history with so much reverence as they havest been, after the concerned person is dead—it is their noble character and excellent virtues that havest made them immortal, and worthy of respect and honour. But to get this honour, these great souls had to suffer much, as is evident from their lives. I wouldst be so fortunate to get the same sort of honour and good fame in history by such a simple means as merely living like a hermit in the forest for a meagre period of fourteen years. Say, how much do fourteen years count in a person's life of so many countless decades—verily, the fourteen years would fly away, and one day they wouldst be something of the past*. {*Lord Ram has said this to Sita in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 62.}

So, under the present circumstances, the wisest, the most prudent, and a well-considered thing that we couldst be doing is to have patience, show resilience and fortitude, remain calm, exercise self-control, and not be swept-off our feet by the swirling tides of emotions. For sooth, if we fall into the trap of emotions and let ourselves be driven by what sentiments demand, we shalt get nothing but ignominy and infamy as a consequence.”]

संभावित कहूँ अपजस लाहू । मरन कोटि सम दारुन दाहू ॥ ७ ॥

तुझ सन तात बहुत का कहऊँ । दिँँ उतरु फिरि पातकु लहऊँ ॥ ८ ॥

sambhāvita kahum̐ apajasa lāhū. marana kōṭi sama dārūna dāhū. 7.

tumha sana tāta bahuta kā kaha'ūm̐. di'ēm̐ utaru phiri pātakū laha'ūm̐. 8.

Verily indeed, for a person of repute to get infamy, a bad name and a negative image in the world is more hurtful and tormenting, and is far worse than his dying a thousand times. (7)

My dear chief minister (tāta)! What more can I tell you in this regard (for you are wise and learned yourself, and need no elaborations on this subject).

If I continue to speak before thee any more, it wouldst be a sinful act in itself for me to do so. [Why? Because it wouldst give the impression that I am preaching thee as if thou art ignorant. Further, thou art like an elder member of our family; I respect thee as I wouldst respect mine father*, and it wouldst seem that I am defying thee by not paying heed to thine requests by arguing with thee. So therefore, I don't want to say anything more on this topic.]¹ (8)

[Note—¹This was a polite way of Lord Ram telling Sumantra that it was enough, and there was no use in dragging the matter any further—for he (Lord Ram) is not going to return. So let this issue be finally rested now; it's futile arguing and counter-arguing any further on this subject.

*Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 39; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that follows Doha no. 95 herein below.]

दो०. पितु पद गहि कहि कोटि नति बिनय करब कर जोरि ।

चिंता कवनिहु बात कै तात करिअ जनि मोरि ॥ ९५ ॥

dōhā.

pitu pada gahi kahi kōṭi nati binaya karaba kara jōri.
cintā kavanihu bāta kai tāta kari'a jani mōri. 95.

Lord Ram requested Sumantra as follows: 'Please hold my father's feet on my behalf and tell him that I have offered a thousand bows before him. Then fold your hands and quote me as follows: "My dear father (tāta), you needn't worry in the least about me (and my companions, i.e. Sita and Laxman). We shalt be alright by thine blessings."¹' (Doha no. 95)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 and Chanda line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 151.]

चौ०. तुम्ह पुनि पितु सम अति हित मोरें । बिनती करउँ तात कर जोरें ॥ १ ॥

सब बिधि सोइ करतव्य तुम्हारें । दुख न पाव पितु सोच हमारें ॥ २ ॥

caupā'i.

tumha puni pitu sama ati hita mōrēm. binatī kara'um tāta kara jōrēm. 1.
saba bidhi sō'i karatabya tumhārēm. dukha na pāva pitu sōca hamārēm. 2.

Lord Ram continued to comfort Sumantra, saying: 'My dear (chief minister—"tāta"), thou art a great well-wisher of mine in the same way as my father is¹. Hence, I join

the palms of my hands before thee and pray (request) most earnestly (in the same way as I wouldst have done if I hadst been standing before mine father at this moment and needed to address him on some urgent matter). (1)

Prithee, it is your moral obligation and duty by all accounts² to ensure that my father dost naught suffer in grief due to separation from me.' (2)

[Note—¹Refer also to: (a) Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 39; (b) Valmiki's Ramayana, Ayodhya Kand, Canto 52, verse nos. 22, 64.

Lord Ram emphasizes here that he does not treat Sumantra as being merely a chief minister of the kingdom whose duty is to obey the command of the king or the prince; the Lord treats him as being equal in stature to his own father. This is the reason why the Lord has folded his hands and joined the palms in a prayerful mode before Sumantra to show great respect to him, instead of simply speaking to him as a prince would normally do with his chief minister.

²Lord Ram reminds Sumantra of his obligations and responsibilities at this crucial juncture in the history of the kingdom of Ayodhya, as he was the senior most minister of the kingdom as well as a close confidante of king Dasrath.

To wit, Lord Ram requests Sumantra to take care of everything and act wisely by stepping into his father's shoes till the time the latter recovers himself from the initial shock of his beloved son Ram leaving for the forest, and he becomes able to resume his responsibilities as the king of a mighty kingdom. It was very important and crucial that Sumantra maintains his mental balance as the burden of governing and administering the kingdom would now fall on his shoulders. If Sumantra too becomes emotional and loses his mental bearings, there would be utter chaos and anarchy in the kingdom, the entire administrative structure would come crushing down, and chances are that enemies would exploit the situation to attack from all sides. Truly, it would be a catastrophic situation if it is ever allowed to happen.]

सुनि रघुनाथ सचिव संबादू । भयउ सपरिजन बिकल निषादू ॥ ३ ॥

पुनि कछु लखन कही कटु बानी । प्रभु बरजे बड़ अनुचित जानी ॥ ४ ॥

सकुचि राम निज सपथ देवाई । लखन सँदेसु कहिअ जनि जाई ॥ ५ ॥

sunī raghunātha saciva sambādū. bhaya'u saparijana bikala niṣādū. 3.
puni kachu lakhana kahī kaṭu bānī. prabhu barajē barā anucita jānī. 4.
sakuci rāma nija sapatha dēvā'ī. lakhana sam'dēsu kahi'a jani jā'ī. 5.

Guha Nishad and his companions (who were standing nearby) felt very sad and distressed when they heard the above conversation betwixt Lord Ram (the Lord of the Raghus) and his chief minister (Sumantra)¹. (3)

Meanwhile, Laxman said some very bitter words that were highly objectionable, hearing which Lord Ram told him to keep quiet and say nothing more. (4)

Lord Ram felt embarrassed at Laxman's angry outburst, and feeling abashed he pleaded with Sumantra to bear in mind their amiable personal relationship and neglect what Laxman has said.

The Lord further requested Sumantra not to repeat Laxman's words before anyone else (such as king Dasrath in the present context)². (5)

[Note—¹The sight of Sumantra falling at the feet of Lord Ram and weeping bitterly like a child after the former had pleaded with the Lord to return home as requested by his father Dasrath, and the extremely helpless, heartbroken and despondent way Sumantra felt when the Lord refused to return home as narrated in the verses herein above* was so pathetic that it would be natural for anyone watching it to be moved and become emotionally upset. {*Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 94—to Chaupai line no. 2 that follows Doha no. 95 herein above.}

²Laxman was so devoted to Lord Ram and loved him so much that if anyone or any situation gave the impression that the Lord was being targeted in an adverse manner, Laxman would lose his cool and responded most vehemently.

We find two instances of this happening in Ram Charit Manas. The first was during the bow-breaking ceremony in Janakpur when sage Parashuram came angrily to punish the person who had broken the bow, because it belonged to Lord Shiva whom Parashuram worshipped. No sooner it became clear to Laxman that the sage was about to unleash his wrath on Lord Ram, but he immediately jumped into the fray and upbraided Parashuram so fearlessly and boldly that the sage himself was taken aback by Laxman's courage and temerity to face him in a fierce tit-for-tat verbal dual, a situation that the sage had never before faced in his life, for he was accustomed to everyone bowing before him and not confronting him. At that time also, Lord Ram had to intervene to calm things down and assuage the angry Parashuram before things got nastier, and some untoward calamity happened. This episode is narrated in great detail in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 268—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 285.

The second episode appears later on in our story, when Lord Ram lived in Chitrakoot. One day Sita had a dream that Bharat is coming, and that he is accompanied by a large number of people and an army. This created some confusion to Lord Ram, for he wondered at what Bharat's intention could be. When Laxman observed that the Lord was a little worried and upset by the prospect of Bharat's arrival, he (Laxman) grew furious and assured Lord Ram that he need not worry at all, for if Bharat is coming there with some malefic intentions, such as to attack and imprison Lord Ram in the hope to prevent the Lord from ever returning to Ayodhya and claiming the throne, thinking that since the Lord is alone in the forest he won't be able defend himself against the might of the army that Bharat was bringing along, then Laxman assured Lord Ram that he need not worry at all. Laxman declared that Bharat was sorely mistaken if he harboured any ill thoughts against Lord Ram, for he (Laxman) alone was competent to obliterate the entire company that came with Bharat, and make the latter pay a heavy price for his misadventure. At that time also, Lord Ram would intervene and calm Laxman down. This episode is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 226—to Doha no. 231.

In Veda Vyas' "Adhyatma Ramayan" we read that at the time when Laxman learnt of king Dasrath ordering Lord Ram to go to the forest, he (Laxman) had got so

furious that he told Lord Ram that if the Lord gives him his permission, Laxman would put his father to death, along with everyone else, including Bharat, who is a part of the conspiracy of sending Lord Ram to the forest. This episode is narrated in Veda Vyas' "Adhyatma Ramayan", Ayodhya Kand, Canto 4, verse nos. 14-17.]

कह सुमंत्रु पुनि भूप सँदेसू । सहि न सकिहि सिय बिपिन कलेसू ॥ ६ ॥
जेहि बिधि अवध आव फिरि सीया । सोइ रघुबरहि तुम्हहि करनीया ॥ ७ ॥
नतरु निपट अवलंब बिहीना । मैं न जिअब जिमि जल बिनु मीना ॥ ८ ॥

kaha sumantru puni bhūpa saṁdēsū. sahi na sakihi siya bipina kalēsū. 6.
jēhi bidhi avadha āva phiri sīyā. sō'i raghubarahi tumhahi karanīyā. 7.
nataru nipaṭa avalamba bihīnā. mair̥m na ji'aba jimi jala binu mīnā. 8.

After that, Sumantra conveyed to Lord Ram king Dasrath's message pertaining to Sita¹. He said: 'The king has instructed me to tell you that Sita would not be able to cope with the countless hardships and troubles that are unavoidable in the forest. (6)

So, in whatever way she would return to Ayodhya, oh Lord Raghubir, it is now upto you to devise a mean to make it possible². (7)

[The king further said—] Otherwise, since I (Dasrath) would be rendered without any kind of solace and succour (if even Sita refuses to come back home), it is sure that I will never survive in the same way as a fish does not live without water.' (8)

[Note—¹Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 82.

²Sumantra had waited till the time it was sure that Lord Ram and Laxman would not go back home; then he conveyed to Lord Ram the king's message regarding Sita, that the king has asked the Lord to send Sita back if he and his brother decide not to return. Sumantra was wise enough not to have directly asked Sita to return home, for he was sure she won't. How did he guess Sita would refuse? It was obvious to him after Lord Ram himself turned down Sumantra's pleas to return, followed by caustic remarks of Laxman that gave ample signs how angry he was.

So, in order to avoid any further embarrassment to himself, Sumantra decided to put the ball in Lord Ram's court, and let the Lord decide how the things should be.]

दो०. मइकेँ ससुरें सकल सुख जबहिं जहाँ मनु मान ।
तहँ तब रहिहि सुखेन सिय जब लागि बिपति बिहान ॥ ९६ ॥
dōhā.

ma'ikēm sasarēm sakala sukha jabahim jahām̐ manu māna.
tam̐ha taba rahihi sukhēna siya jaba lagi bipati bihāna. 96.

Sumantra continued: 'Her (Sita's) parental home (at Janakpur) as well as her in-law's home (at Ayodhya) have all sorts of comforts one can expect to have. She can stay

anywhere, and as long as she wants to stay at that place, till the unfavourable time passes away (i.e. till the end of the fourteen years when her husband Lord Ram's forest exile ends and he comes back home).¹ (Doha no. 96)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 82.

We have read earlier that Dasrath wanted Sita to come back because by seeing her he would find some comfort and solace for his tormented heart, and the burden of guilt on his conscience would be lightened a bit. He was already highly upset and distressed when it became clear that Lord Ram would definitely proceed to the forest, and when the poor and helpless king discovered to his dismay that even Sita and Laxman have decided to join Lord Ram, his grief and agony knew no bounds.

Dasrath was quite certain that neither Lord Ram nor Laxman would return, and this is evident from the doubt about it that he expressed to Sumantra. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 82.}

So, as a last resort, to salvage what he could from a doomed situation, he wished that at least Sita could be persuaded to return home by telling her about the horrors and hardships of the forest so as to create some kind of fear in her mind, and then when she becomes a little bit uncertain in her resolve to go to the forest, to tell her of the options she had before her in order to avoid the hardships of life in the wilds, and this was to return home and pass her days in peace anywhere she wants, be it in her own parental home at Janakpur, or in her in-law's home at Ayodhya.

Now, Dasrath immediately realized that Sita may not feel very inclined to live in Ayodhya without her husband, as she would not only feel very lonely but would also find living amongst those people who were responsible for sending her husband to the forest too much of an emotional stress to cope with. Further, Kaikeyi, pervert and wicked as she was, would make life hell for Sita with constant taunts and sarcastic remarks. It would literally be a life in hell for helpless and distraught Sita, and it would be worse than the discomfort she might experience in the forest while living in the company of her loving husband and a devoted brother-in-law who would make all efforts to keep her in good cheer.

Hence, Dasrath offered her an alternative—she could go instead to Janakpur and stay there, as life and time would be easier for her in her parental home, because it was there she had grown up, there she would find company of her childhood friends, as well as the loving care of her parents. She would find Janakpur a better option as compared to Ayodhya because she might think that people in Janakpur were more sympathetic towards her and held her dearer to their hearts as compared to the people of Ayodhya, as it is quite possible that she has developed repugnance towards the people of her in-law's place and considers them hostile towards her for the simple reason that they were too pervert and evil enough to have no mercy or compassion even for their own prince, Lord Ram, as it was they who had banished an innocent prince to the forest, while she was an outsider for them, meaning she can expect nothing from such heartless creatures.]

चौ०. बिनती भूप कीन्ह जेहि भाँती । आरति प्रीति न सो कहि जाती ॥ १ ॥

पितु सँदेसु सुनि कृपानिधाना । सियहि दीन्ह सिख कोटि बिधाना ॥ २ ॥

caupā'i.

binatī bhūpa kīnha jēhi bhāmṭī. āratī prīti na sō kahi jāṭī. 1.
pitu samḍesu suni kṛpānidhānā. siyahi dīnha sikha kōṭi bidhānā. 2.

The piteous, doleful and affectionate way the king (Dasrath) had made entreaties to Lord Ram and Sita to return home was so heart-wrenching and painful to hear that the intensity of agony and depth of grief expressed by the king in his message which Sumantra conveyed to Lord Ram cannot be sufficiently described in words. (1)

After hearing his father's message, Lord Ram, who was a treasury of mercy, compassion and kindness (kṛpānidhānā), turned to Sita and tried many ways to explain the situation to her in an effort to send her back home¹ in compliance with his father's wish. (2)

[Note—¹Earlier too, Lord Ram had made a similar attempt to dissuade Sita from accompanying him to the forest, even going to the extent of telling her that if she persists than she would get nothing but sufferings and hardships in return. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 61—to Doha no. 63.}]

सासु ससुर गुर प्रिय परिवारू । फिरहु त सब कर मिटै खभारू ॥ ३ ॥
सुनि पति बचन कहति बैदेही । सुनहु प्रानपति परम सनेही ॥ ४ ॥

sāsu sasura gura priya parivārū. phiratu ta saba kara miṭai khabhārū. 3.
suni pati bacana kahati baidēhī. sunahu prānapati parama sanēhī. 4.

Lord Ram concluded his advice to Sita by telling her: 'If thou wouldst return home, it wouldst be very helpful to ease the pain and grief that havest afflicted thine mother-and-father in-law, thine guru (the family preceptor, sage Vasistha), all the others dear members of our family.'¹ (3)

Hearing her dear husband's words, Sita (Vaidehi) replied: 'Listen my most beloved (parama sanēhī) husband who is my Lord, and the very soul of my being (prānapati). (4)

[Note—¹We discover that details of what Lord Ram told Sita have been skipped here, though the previous verse no. 2 says that the Lord tried many ways to try to persuade her to go back home. The reason is that more or less all the things that the Lord might have said to Sita have already been narrated earlier in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 61—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 63. Hence, no purpose would be served by repeating them.

So in this verse we read only about the concluding words of Lord Ram.]

प्रभु करुनामय परम बिबेकी । तनु तजि रहति छाँह किमि छेंकी ॥ ५ ॥
प्रभा जाइ कहँ भानु बिहाई । कहँ चंद्रिका चंदु तजि जाई ॥ ६ ॥

prabhu karunāmaya parama bibēkī. tanu taji rahati chāmṣha kimi chēṅkī. 5.
prabhā jā'i kaham' bhānu bihā'i. kaham' candrikā candu taji jā'i. 6.

The Lord (prabhu) is the very embodiment of mercy, compassion and kindness (karunāmaya), as well as most wise, sagacious and erudite (parama bibēkī).

Verily tell me, when can or how can a shadow ever live or exist without the body that forms it¹? (5)

[She cites another example and says—] Similarly, where can the sunlight go if the sun is not there (i.e. how can there be sunlight without the presence of the sun; or how can the sunlight be separated from the sun), and where would the moon's light go after leaving the moon (i.e. how can the moonlight exist without the presence of the moon)?² (6)

[Note—¹Here Sita is the 'shadow', and Lord Ram is the 'body' that forms a shadow. She means that it is impossible to separate the body of a person from its shadow, or conversely, to separate the person's shadow from his physical body; they go together. Wherever the person goes, the shadow of his body follows him. In a similar way, says Sita, how can she go a different way or in a different direction than where her dear husband Lord Ram goes? It is impossible to happen.

With this simple and witty analogy, Sita made it clear that she would go where the Lord goes, and no other possibility is there which can be considered.

²To wit, Sita says that even as it is impossible and ridiculous to imagine that the sunlight and the moonlight would exist without the sun and the moon respectively, so it is impossible to imagine that she would ever live separated from her dear husband, Lord Ram.]

पतिहि प्रेममय बिनय सुनाई । कहति सचिव सन गिरा सुहाई ॥ ७ ॥

तुम्ह पितु ससुर सरिस हितकारी । उतरु देउँ फिरि अनुचित भारी ॥ ८ ॥

patihi prēmamaya binaya sunā'i. kahati saciva sana girā suhā'i. 7.
tumha pitu sasura sarisa hitakārī. utaru dē'um' phiri anucita bhārī. 8.

After affectionately replying to her husband (briefly, but to the point, to clearly imply that she would not leave Lord Ram under any circumstance), she turned to the chief minister (Sumantra) and spoke to him very politely and pleasantly¹. (7)

Sita told Sumantra: 'Thou art as honourable and worthy of respect for me as is my father-in-law (king Dasrath), and thou art mine well-wisher as much as he is.

So therefore, it is improper for me to answer thee on thy face as it violates protocol of good conduct and decent behaviour for a daughter-in-law². (8)

[Note—¹Sita spoke very courteously to Sumantra; there was no rancour or bitterness in her words or tone as was the case with Laxman who had spoken very angrily to Sumantra just a while ago—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 96 herein above.

²Sita clarifies in Doha no. 97 that follows herein below why she has chosen to speak directly to Sumantra although it was not in good taste for her to do so.

She says in essence: “My honourable Sumantra, please doth naught take it in the wrong light under the present circumstance that I am breaking tradition and speaking to thee directly, as there is no other option left for me but to answer and explain my views to you first hand. I have no intention at all to either insult thee, or undermine thine honourable stature.”]

दो०. आरति बस सनमुख भइउं बिलगु न मानब तात ।
आरजसुत पद कमल बिनु बादि जहाँ लगि नात ॥ ९७ ॥

dōhā.

ārati basa sanamukha bha'i'um' bilagu na mānaba tāta.
ārajasuta pada kamala binu bādi jahām' lagi nāta. 97.

Explaining the reason for answering Sumantra on his face although it was improper for her to do so, Sita says: ‘It is a grave situation and I am very distressed. It is for this reason I have taken the liberty to answer thee in thy face¹. So therefore my dear and honourable Sumantra, please do not take it in the wrong light (and please forgive me for my impertinence)².

Without being in the company (or in the service) of the lotus-like feet of the noble son of the exalted king (“ārajasuta”, i.e. Lord Ram), all other relations in the world are useless and non-existent for me.³’ (Doha no. 97)

[Note-¹The same idea, that those who are very distressed rarely think of adhering to norms of behaviour that normally apply to times when things are easy on the mind and heart, has been reiterated elsewhere also in Ram Charit Manas—apropos: Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 269.

²The second point is that wise men do not mind the odd behaviour of a person who is in great distress, as the mind of that person does not function in the right manner, and his emotions drive him to often times act irrationally—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 177.

³Sita has used the word “ārajasuta” for Lord Ram and has employed similar logic to insist that she would go with the Lord to the forest in Valmiki’s Ramayana, Ayodhya Kand, Canto 27, verse nos. 4-6.

In Goswami Tulsidas’ book “Geetawali Ramayan”, Sita also employs the same word with respect to Lord Ram—refer: Geetawali Ramayan, Sundar Kand, verse no. 7.

Sita means that whatever relations that exist in this world have any importance or relevance to her only till the moment all those concerned are related to Lord Ram in some way or the other, be as the Lord’s devotee, follower or servant, for otherwise everything is null and void and meaningless for her—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 64—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 65; (ii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 66.]

चौ०. पितु बैभव बिलास में डीठा । नृप मनि मुकुट मिलित पद पीठा ॥ १ ॥
सुखनिधान अस पितु गृह मोरें । पिय बिहीन मन भाव न भोरें ॥ २ ॥

caupā'ī.

pitu baibhava bilāsa maim̐ ḍīṭhā. nr̥pa mani mukuṭa milita pada pīṭhā. 1.
sukhanidhāna asa pitu gr̥ha mōrēm̐. piya bihīna mana bhāva na bhōrēm̐. 2.

I have seen the glory and majesty of my father (i.e. king Janak of Janakpur), and have enjoyed the material comforts that were available at his place¹.

Even great kings of the land bow before my father so much so that their crowns would the shoes of my father². (1)

Such is the palace of my father that there is an abundance of all sorts of comfort and pleasure in it. But I say truly, without my beloved husband with me, none of those things have any charm or attraction for me; I am not interested in enjoying them if it means separation from my dear husband³. (2)

[Note—¹Janakpur was a prosperous, majestic and famous kingdom, with gardens, rich market places, wide avenues, palaces etc. Its magnificence, opulence and beauty has been outlined in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 212—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 214; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 224; (iii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 287—to Doha no. 289.

²Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 214 where we read that many great kings used to wait at the gates of the palace of king Janak for their turn to visit him.

³This is Sita's answer to what Sumantra had said in Doha no. 96 herein above—that she could choose to live in her father's home if she wants to.]

ससुर चक्रवड़ कोसलराऊ । भुवन चारिदस प्रगट प्रभाऊ ॥ ३ ॥
आगें होइ जेहि सुरपति लेई । अरध सिंघासन आसनु देई ॥ ४ ॥

sasura cakkava'i kōsalarā'ū. bhuvana cāridasa pragaṭa prabhā'ū. 3.
āgēm̐ hō'i jēhi surapati lē'ī. aradha siṅghāsana āsanu dē'ī. 4.

My father-in-law is a great Emperor of the vast empire of Kaushal (also known as 'Ayodhya') whose domain and fame extend over a very large circle on the surface of earth (cakkava'i kōsalarā'ū).

Nay, his glories are well known even beyond the earth, for they reach all the fourteen Bhuvans of this creation (i.e. in all the corners of the different sections in which this creation has been divided by the ancient scriptures)¹. (3)

Even the king of Gods (i.e. Indra) goes forward to welcome him reverentially, and washes his (Dasrath's) feet before offering him a throne to sit upon². (4)

[Note—¹The fourteen Bhuvans, according to the Padma Puran, are the following: (A) The upper worlds called Urdhva Lokas are seven in number:—(i) Bhu/Bhūḥ, (ii) Bhuvaha/Bhuvah, (iii) Swaha/Swah, (iv) Maha/Mah, (v) Janaha/Janah, (vi) Tapaha/Tapah, and (vii) Satyam/Satyam. (B) The seven nether worlds or lower worlds called Adhaha/Adhah Loka:— (i) Atal/Atala, (ii) Vital/Vitala, (iii) Satal/Sutala, (iv) Rasaatal/Rasātala, (v) Talaatal/Talātala, (vi) Mahaatal/Mahātāl, and (vii) Paataal/Pātāla. The total number of Lokas is, therefore, fourteen.

The *Mundak Upanishad* of Atharva Veda, Mundak (Canto)1, section 1, verse no. 1 says that these fourteen Bhuvans are protected by Brahma the creator who created this world.

The Atharva Veda's *Gopal Uttar Tapini Upanishad*, verse no. 35 says that Brahma-Loka is like the ceremonial umbrella on the head of Lord Vishnu, while the seven nether worlds known as the 'Patal-Lokas' represent the Lord's feet.

²The glories of king Dasrath have been lauded by sage Vasistha almost in the same way in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 173.]

ससुर एतादृस अवध निवासू । प्रिय परिवारु मातु सम सासू ॥ ५ ॥
बिनु रघुपति पद पदुम परागा । मोहि केउ सपनेहुँ सुखद न लागा ॥ ६ ॥

sasuru ētādṛsa avadha nivāsū. priya parivāru mātu sama sāsū. 5.
binu raghupati pada paduma parāgā. mōhi kē'u sapanēhum' sukhada na lāgā. 6.

Such glorious indeed is my father-in-law. At the same time, it is also so comfortable and pleasant to live in Ayodhya, with my loving family members and a mother-in-law who is like my own mother. (5)

But unfortunately, without the company of Lord Ram, and the joy it gives me to serve his lotus-like feet, which is equivalent to the bliss got by drinking nectar of the lotus flower—verily I say, none of the other things of the world, no matter what or who they may be, would ever give me the same kind of joy and pleasure (that I get by being in the company of Lord Ram and serving him)¹. (6)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 64—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 65.]

अगम पंथ बनभूमि पहारा । करि केहरि सर सरित अपारा ॥ ७ ॥
कोल किरात कुरंग बिहंगा । मोहि सब सुखद प्रानपति संग ॥ ८ ॥

agama pantha banabhūmi pahārā. kari kēhari sara sarita apārā. 7.
kōla kirāta kuraṅga bihaṅgā. mōhi saba sukhada prānapati saṅgā. 8.

I verily say that the difficult path of the forest, the hostile surroundings, the formidable mountains and hills, the countless wild animals such as elephants and lions, the large lakes and rivers, --- (7)

--- The wild tribes and hunters who live in the forest, such as the Kols and the Kirats, ferocious animals such as boars etc., and birds of prey—all such things and creatures that normally would cause terror in the hearts of travellers would give me pleasure instead when I am in the company of my beloved husband, Lord Ram¹.’ (8)

[Note—¹Sita has said a similar thing to Lord Ram earlier too when the Lord had tried to dissuade her from accompanying him to the forest before his departure—Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 62—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 63 (Lord Ram cites precisely the same things while trying to persuade Sita to stay home); and (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 65—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 67 (Sita’s reply to Lord Ram).

Sumantra had said in verse nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 96 herein above that king Dasrath has said that Sita would not be able to cope with the immensity of hardships and sufferings in the forest, so she should better come back. The present verse nos. 7-8 is Sita’s answer to it.]

दो०. सासु ससुर सन मोरि हुँति बिनय करबि परि पायँ ।
मोर सोचु जनि करिअ कछु मैं बन सुखी सुभायँ ॥ ९८ ॥

dōhā.

sāsu sasura sana mōri humṭi binaya karabi pari pāyam̐.
mōra sōcu jani kari'a kachu mair̐ bana sukhī subhāyam̐. 98.

Sita said further to Sumantra: ‘Please tell my mother-in-law and father-in-law that I fall at their feet and pray most humbly that they should not worry for me at all, or be concerned about me and my safety in the least—for I shalt be very comfortable and happy in the forest.¹’ (Doha no. 98)

[Note—¹In the next two verses that follow herein below, Sita gives the reason for her confidence and her assertion that she would be happy and well protected in the forest.

Lord Ram has said a similar thing in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 95 herein above. Sita had caught a hint from the Lord how to conclude her submission and rest the matter for good, leaving no space for further arguments or discussions. She made it clear to Sumantra that she is not going back to Ayodhya, but would accompany Lord Ram in his onward journey into the forest.

Refer also to: Adhyatma Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, Canto 7, verse nos. 12-13 in this context.]

चौ०. प्राननाथ प्रिय देवर साथ । बीर धुरीन धरें धनु भाथा ॥ १ ॥
नहिं मग श्रमु भ्रमु दुख मन मोरें । मोहि लागि सोचु करिअ जनि भोरें ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

prānanātha priya dēvara sāthā. bīra dhurīna dharēm dhanu bhāthā. 1.
nahim maga śramu bhramu dukha mana mōrēm. mōhi lagi sōcu kari'a jani
bhōrēm. 2.

[Concluding her message for her father-in-law, Sita tells Sumantra¹: ‘My husband who is very dear to my soul (“prānanātha”, i.e. Lord Ram), and my dear brother-in-law (Laxman), are with me (in the forest, to look after me and protect me). They are most valiant, brave and courageous, and they have formidable bows in their hands as well as quivers full of invincible arrows (tied around their waists).

[To wit, they are always ready to protect me should the need arise. With such valorous warriors by my side every moment of my life in the forest, say, where is any danger to me; obviously, not in the least; I have nothing to fear from.] (1)

I do not have any weariness arising out of a long journey on foot in the forest, and neither do I have any delusions or misconceptions about what I am to face in the forest. [To wit, I am well aware of all the circumstances and hardships of life in the forest, and I have taken a very conscious and well-thought of decision to live there. Hence, I have no reservations on this count. I know that life in the forest is not a bed of roses, but I have aught naught to either be worried and get perturbed about it, or feel affright from it.]

Therefore, I am not at all sad or worried at the prospect of living in the forest. So, please do not be worried about me (and my safety) even unwittingly (for there is no cause for it).’ (2)

[Note—¹This concluding statement of Sita was obviously meant for her father-in-law Dasrath, who seemed to be very worried about her well-being in the hostile environment of the forest, but at the same time it was also meant for Sumantra who too was very worried about Sita going to the forest. This worry of Sumantra was manifest in his countenance and the way he spoke, and sure enough it could not be concealed from being observed by Sita. So, she sought to reassure the old chief minister, whom she has already likened to her father-in-law*, not be worried about her at all. {*Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 97 herein above.}

In the previous Doha no. 98, she has asked Sumantra to bow before her father and mother in-laws on her behalf and assure them that she would be very happy and comfortable in the forest. As we have noted herein above, Sita was aware that Sumantra too was very worried about her. So, in the present two verses, she tells him that she is well aware of the difficulties of life in the wilds, and she is not at all deluded about the hardships there. She has weighed all the pros and cons thoroughly, and has come to the conclusion that life in the forest with her husband and brother-in-law by her side would be a far better option than to live a lonely and neglected life of grief and pain in Ayodhya separated from her husband, for there she would feel imprisoned even amongst her own family members, leading a forced life of misery and sorrows, while in the forest she would feel as free as a lark and live happily in the company of her beloved husband and devoted brother-in-law.]

सुनि सुमंत्रु सिय सीतलि बानी । भयउ बिकल जनु फनि मनि हानी ॥ ३ ॥

नयन सूझ नहिं सुनइ न काना । कहि न सकइ कछु अति अकुलाना ॥ ४ ॥

sunī sumantru siya sītali bānī. bhaya'u bikala janu phani mani hānī. 3.
nayana sūjha nahim suna'i na kānā. kahi na saka'i kachu ati akulānā. 4.

When Sumantra heard the words of Sita that were spoken with cool confidence and a firm resolve, he became exceedingly distressed as if a serpent has lost its Mani¹. (3)

[Like the serpent who gets virtually blind and becomes extremely agitated if it loses the precious Mani—] Sumantra was shell-shocked, exceptionally dismayed and so emotionally upset that his nerves gave way, and he felt that his eyesight and hearing were fading away². He was dumbfounded and could not utter a word, so much agitated, nervous and perplexed he was. (4)

[Note—¹The 'Mani' is a luminescent sac formed by secretions of the skin on the hood of a special species of serpents. It is believed that the serpent can see in the dark due to the illumination provided by this Mani, which also helps the serpent for look for food during the darkness of the night. If the serpent loses its Mani, it would die of grief as then it becomes virtually blind, not even able to find food.

This analogy is usually used to give an idea of the distress a person faces when some very unpleasant development occurs which robs him of all comfort and happiness.

²A similar emotionally distressful condition was experienced by Sumantra as he entered the palace and every person whom he met nervously asked him what news he had brought, for he had come empty-handed—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 148.]

राम प्रबोधु कीन्ह बहु भाँती । तदपि होति नहिं सीतलि छाती ॥ ५ ॥
जतन अनेक साथ हित कीन्हे । उचित उतर रघुनंदन दीन्हे ॥ ६ ॥

rāma prabōdhu kīnha bahu bhām̐ti. tadapi hōti nahim sītali chātī. 5.
jatana anēka sātha hita kīnhē. ucita utara raghunandana dīnhē. 6.

[When Lord Ram saw the precarious emotional condition of Sumantra, that he was so shocked and on the verge of swooning and falling down unconscious, the Lord intervened to comfort him and assuage the torment of his heart.]

Although Lord Ram comforted and reassured Sumantra in many different ways¹, yet the latter's heart found no peace and solace. (5)

Meanwhile, Sumantra tried desperately to somehow prevail upon Lord Ram to take him along to the forest, but the Lord gave him proper replies as suited for the occasion even as he politely declined to accept Sumantra's proposal. (6)

[Note—¹Lord Ram put his hand on Sumantra's shoulders and softly patted him. He told Sumantra: "My dear Sumantra. Thou art so wise and sagacious that our whole family is proud of thee. Please understand the gravity of the present situation when acting childish will be catastrophic for all of us, for now the burden of the kingdom

lies squarely on thine able shoulders; my father is so upset that he won't be able to look after the affairs of our kingdom for quite some time now, and I am not there. If thee too lose thine mental balance, then imagine what horrors would befall on the state and its citizens. It is the moral duty and responsibility of a chief minister to remain calm, exercise self-restraint and act with utmost wisdom during adversities, for if thou buckle under emotional pressure, the whole edifice would come crashing down like a pack of cards. It wouldst be a grave sin and a most deplorable thing ever to happen on your account. This is not the time to wail and grieve like a woman or a child or a faint-hearted man; be bold, and show patience and resilience. Remember: after every night there is a day. These unfortunate days of my forest exile wouldst soon come to an end, and then everything wouldst be fine.

Why art thou so upset at my going to the forest: a prince is expected to visit the far away parts of his kingdom to be acquainted with the land and its people and their problems, to get a first-hand account and an experience of every aspect of his kingdom. This is necessary because it wouldst prepare him to deal with the administration of the land and the welfare of his subjects in a proper and practical manner once he ascends the throne to become a king. This wouldst make him famous in history as a wise and prudent ruler. So therefore, my going to the forest is to be considered in this light, for it is a boon rather than a bane for me.

So my dear Sumantra, become cheerful, have courage, and show prudence. Get up and do your duties as per the Law of Dharma that is expected from thee.”]

मेटि जाइ नहिं राम रजाई । कठिन करम गति कछु न बसाई ॥ ७ ॥

राम लखन सिय पद सिरु नाई । फिरेउ बनिक जिमि मूर गवाँई ॥ ८ ॥

mēṭi jā'i nahim rāma rajā'ī. kaṭhina karama gati kachu na basā'ī. 7.
rāma lakhana siya pada siru nā'ī. phirē'u banika jimi mūra gavā'ī. 8.

Since it was not possible for Sumantra to defy Lord Ram's orders (to let the Lord proceed to the forest and return home himself), he could not do anything in the matter as he realized that the dictates of Fate and Destiny are too strange and difficult to comprehend and oppose. (7)

Finally, he (Sumantra) bowed his head at the feet of Lord Ram, Laxman and Sita, and with a heavy heart and distraught mind, as well as overcome with a guilty conscious, just like a grieving trader who is reeling under great losses that are compounded by the loss of even his capital, he turned back to go home (to Ayodhya).¹ (8)

[Note—¹Sumantra returned with a lowered head as if a great trader had lost everything he had in some venture from which he had expected to gain a profit and increase his capital, or like a warrior defeated in a battle, who would have preferred death to being alive to suffer the ignominy and shame of defeat.

Grief and sorrow bore heavily on Sumantra's conscience; he had failed to carry out his king's orders to bring Lord Ram back home. It was the first time in his life that this aged chief minister had experienced this piquant situation. What answer would he give to the king; what face would he show to the anxious citizens who were surely must be watching for his arrival, expecting that Lord Ram, Laxman and Sita were on the chariot, and how will they react when they find the chariot empty?

Sumantra's distressed state of mind and agitation of his heart, his sorrowful looks and grave demeanours are described a little later in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 142—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 148.]

दो०. रथु हाँकेउ हय राम तन हेरि हेरि हिहिनाहिं ।
देखि निषाद बिषादबस धुनहिं सीस पछिताहिं ॥ ९९ ॥
dōhā.

ratha hām̐kē'u haya rāma tana hēri hēri hihināhiṁ.
dēkhi niṣāda biṣādabasa dhunahiṁ sīsa pachitāhiṁ. 99.

Even as he (Sumantra) drove the chariot on the path back home, the horses repeatedly turned back and glanced at Lord Ram, neighing wildly as if they were wailing in grief¹.

When Nishad saw how the horses were lamenting and grieving upon being forced to leave Lord Ram², he (Nishad) beat his head and regretted much. (Doha no. 99)

[Note—¹The miserable and pitiful condition of the horses of the chariot have also been described in Geetawali Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, verse nos. 86-87.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 142; and (ii) Doha no. 143 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede it.

²It ought to be pointed out here that Lord Ram did not send Guha Nishad back at this point of time, but allowed the latter to accompany him till the Lord reached river Yamuna and crossed it. From here the Lord would proceed to the hermitage of sage Valmiki, and beyond to Chitrakoot. It is here, i.e. after crossing river Yamuna, that Lord Ram asked Guha Nishad to return home. This is explicitly stated in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 111.

That said, we read in Veda Vyas' "Adhyatma Ramayan", Ayodhya Kand, Canto 6, verse nos. 17-27 where it is narrated that Lord Ram asked Nishad to bring a boat so that they can go across the river Ganges. Nishad obeyed, and he himself rowed the boat. When Lord Ram reached the other side of the river, Nishad expressed his desire to accompany the Lord on his onward journey, at which the Lord politely explained the impracticability of this happening, and told Nishad to return home. It is though not mentioned in Adhyatma Ramayan how Nishad returned home. It is quite probable that Sumantra had gone to some distance and stopped the chariot, not being able to decide whether to proceed to Ayodhya or live incognito somewhere in the forest. Nishad met Sumantra, and the two discussed the matter amongst themselves. Finally it was resolved that the best line of action for both of them was to obey Lord Ram and return home.]

चौ०. जासु बियोग बिकल पसु ऐसैं । प्रजा मातु पितु जिइहहिं कैसैं ॥ १ ॥
बरबस राम सुमंत्रु पठाए । सुरसरि तीर आपु तब आए ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

jāsu biyōga bikala pasu aisē. prajā mātu pitu jī'hahim kaisēm. 1.
barabasa rāma sumantru paṭhā'ē. surasari tīra āpu taba ā'ē. 2.

When the grief of separation from Lord Ram had made even the animals (viz. the horses of the chariot) so miserable¹, one wonders how would his subjects (the citizens of Ayodhya), as well as his parents ("mātu pitu"; mother and father) manage to survive without him! (1)

However, after sending Sumantra back home much against his wish², Lord Ram came to the bank of river Ganges, the holy river of the gods. (2)

[Note—¹Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 99 herein above.

²Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 99.]

मागी नाव न केवटु आना । कहइ तुम्हार मरमु मैं जाना ॥ ३ ॥
चरन कमल रज कहूँ सबु कहई । मानुष करनि मूरि कछु अहई ॥ ४ ॥
छुअत सिला भइ नारि सुहाई । पाहन तें न काठ कठिनाई ॥ ५ ॥
तरनिउ मुनि घरिनी होइ जाई । बाट परइ मोरि नाव उड़ाई ॥ ६ ॥

māgī nāva na kēvaṭu ānā. kaha'i tumhāra maramu maim jānā. 3.
carana kamala raja kahum̐ sabu kaha'ī. mānuṣa karani mūri kachu aha'ī. 4.
chu'ata silā bha'i nāri suhā'ī. pāhana tēm na kāṭha kaṭhinā'ī. 5.
tarani'u muni gharini hō'i jā'ī. bāṭa para'i mōri nāva uṛā'ī. 6.

*In order to cross the river and move ahead on his journey to the forest (that lay beyond the territorial boundaries of Ayodhya), Lord Ram summoned a boatman nearby, and asked the latter to ferry him and his companions (Sita and Laxman) to the other side of the river.

But the boatman refused, saying politely but firmly: 'No Lord (I shalt naught do it), for I know thy secret. [What was that 'secret' that made the Kewat, or the boatman, hesitate in immediately obeying Lord Ram? He clarifies it himself below.] (3)

Everyone says (and it has become wildly known) that the dust of thine feet has some sort of magical powers that they canst mysteriously transmute stones into human beings. (4)

Such is the tiding that even a boulder was immediately converted into a charming lady no sooner than it was touched by thine feet¹, so then if that is the case, what chance wouldst mere wood have against that powerful magic, for surely enough wood is not stronger or harder or studier, or possesses more resistance against change, than a stone boulder is by any count (and so therefore the wood stands no chance to stand against or resist the mysterious effect of the dust of thine feet)? (5)

This being the case, then if my boat, which is obviously made of ‘wood’, vanishes from sight and gets transmewed into some honourable lady of some great sage (when it comes into contact with the dust of thine feet, like was the case on the earlier occasion to which I havest just referred heretofore), say then oh Lord, have mercy upon me and mine poor family, my only means of livelihood wouldst go for a toss (for I wot naught ought how then shalt I feed my family and sustain mine self)!² (6)

[Note—*This episode of ‘the boatman and Lord Ram’ has also been beautifully described by Tulsidas in (a) Kavitawali Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, verse nos. 5-10; and (b) Barvai Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, verse nos. 24-25.

Another great saint-poet who was contemporary of Tulsidas was saint Surdas, the famed blind poet who was a great devotee of Lord Krishna. Surdas had also written the story of Lord Ram in his own style, and it is called “Surdas Ram Charitawali”. This particular incident of the Lord and the Kewat has been narrated in it in equally beautiful terms, in Ayodhya Kand, verse nos. 25-27. A full English version of this excellent book “Surdas Ram Charitawali” has been published by the present author, and is available for the interested reader who can access it from the same source from where this present book that he or she is currently reading has been sourced.

In Veda Vyas’ “Adhyatma Ramayan”, there is a variation as to the time when this incident occurred, though the narrative is essentially similar to what we are currently reading in Ram Charit Manas. In Adhyatma Ramayan, the incident is said to have happened when Lord Ram, Laxman and sage Vishwamitra were on their way to Jankapur to attend the bow-breaking ceremony organized by the kingdom’s king Janak; this ceremony would decide who would marry his daughter Sita. Apropos: Veda Vyas’ “Adhyatma Ramayan”, Baal Kand, Canto 6, verse nos. 2-5.

Another variation is this: In Adhyatma Ramayan we read that it was Guha Nishad who had himself arranged for the boat, and then rowed it himself to take Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman across river Ganges—apropos: Adhyatma Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, Canto 6, verse nos. 17-20. He was persuaded by Lord Ram to return home after they had crossed the river—refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, Canto 6, verse nos. 22-27.

¹The boatman is referring to the episode when the touch of Lord Ram’s holy feet had removed the curse of Ahilya, wife of sage Gautam, who had been converted into a stone-boulder due to some mistakes on her part that incurred the sage’s wrath sometimes in the past. After she was freed from the curse and revived back to life, Ahilya offered her thanks and prayers to Lord Ram, bowed before him, and then went back to her husband, sage Gautam’s place.

This incident is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 11-12 and Chanda line nos. 1-16 that precede Doha no. 211.

²The boatman expressly makes this point clear in verse no. 7 that follows herein below.]

एहिं प्रतिपालउँ सबु परिवारू । नहिं जानउँ कछु अउर कबारू ॥ ७ ॥
जौं प्रभु पार अवसि गा चहहू । मोहि पद पदुम पखारन कहहू ॥ ८ ॥

ēhiṃ pratipāla'um̐ sabu parivārū. nahim̐ jāna'um̐ kachu a'ura kabārū. 7.
jau prabhu pāra avasi gā cahahū. mōhi pada paduma pakhārana kahahū. 8.

It is this simple, wooden boat that is mine only means of livelihood, it is the provider of mine sustenance, and with its help I am able to take care of the worldly needs of my whole family (by getting some money by either ferrying passengers across the river, or by fishing), for in all sooth and without any gainsay, I know of no other trade and have no other means, big or small, except this one single method, for mine subsistence. (7)

Therefore, if thou art determined to go to the other side of the river, then prithee, I beg most humbly to first let me wash thine feet before I canst allow thee to board mine boat*.

[*Said Kewat with a rustic logic: “Oh Lord, I can’t take the risk of letting the dust of your feet touch my poor little wooden boat, for it is my sole source of livelihood, and I am sore troubled by the prospect of it getting turned into some fine lady and going home to her dear ones. Say, tell me, what would then happen to my poor family if this happens to pass. I don’t know of any other trade except of ferrying passengers and fishing to feed my family and myself. All of us would starve to death. I personally have nothing against taking you across the river on my boat, except for this mortal fear which the reputation of the dust of your feet has stirred in me, for I can’t be certain that no sooner your feet touches my wooden boat, but it would transmute into something else by magic and vanish from my sight. What would I do then? Who would recompense me? Nothing doing: but however, if you are in urgent need to use my boat, then I offer you a practical solution. Please, let me first wash this trouble-giving ‘dust’ off your feet to make me feel assured that there is no more any risk of my poor boat vanishing by your stepping inside the wooden vessel, and then I shall be very glad and willing to obey your command to take you to the other side; I shall cheerfully do it and row the boat myself.”] (8)

छं०. पद कमल धोइ चढ़ाइ नाव न नाथ उतराई चहौं । १ ।
मोहि राम राउरि आन दसरथ सपथ सब साची कहौं ॥ २ ॥
बरु तीर मारहुँ लखनु पै जब लगि न पाय पखारिहौं । ३ ।
तब लगि न तुलसीदास नाथ कृपाल पारु उतारिहौं ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

pada kamala dhō'i caṛhā'i nāva na nātha utarā'ī cahaur̥m̐. 1.
mōhi rāma rā'uri āna dasaratha sapatha saba sācī kahaur̥m̐. 2.
baru tīra mārhum̐ lakhanu pai jaba lagi na pāya pakhārihaur̥m̐. 3.
taba lagi na tulasīdāsa nātha kṛpāla pāru utārihaur̥m̐. 4.

Oh my Lord! If I be allowed to wash thine lotus-like feet before allowing thee to step inside mine boat¹, then I solemnly say that I wouldst naught want any fare for taking thee across the river. (Chanda line no. 1)

Oh Lord Ram, I say under oath to thee, and swear in the name of the great king of the kingdom, i.e. king Dasrath, that whatever I say is the truth, and that it is said with firmness of resolve. (Chanda line no. 2)

I reiterate that even if Laxman shoots an arrow at me to punish me (for daring to answer back to thee and defying thine orders), but till the time I am able to wash thine feet² --- (Chanda line no. 3)

---I shalt naught take the merciful Lord of Tulsidas (a reference to Lord Ram)³ across the river at any cost.' (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹Kewat's emphasis is on washing the feet of Lord Ram so that the 'dust on the sole of the feet' is washed off. Now, let us consider what might have actually happened when the Lord finally agreed to let the boatman do as he wanted to do. Suppose the boatman brought a bowl of water to wash the feet of the Lord, but then as soon as the Lord would put his feet on the ground just before stepping inside the boat, fresh dust would stick to the wet feet. So, the whole exercise would obviously come to a naught.

Therefore, how did the boatman manage that no dust particle stuck to Lord Ram's feet as he stepped inside his boat after having them washed? There are two options he could have adopted as follows:

(a) The boatman laid out a long cloth, like a red-carpet spread nowadays to welcome special guests, from the spot on the bank of the river close to where he had anchored his boat and where he washed the Lord's feet in a bowl of water, to the boat itself, and asked Lord Ram and his companions to walk on it upto the boat.

(b) The boatman could have washed the Lord's feet just on the side of the boat even as the Lord lifted one leg at a time from the ground and put it inside the boat.

Both the possibilities are there, and none of the scriptures clearly say how the boatman actually managed to do it.

²All the while during this outburst of the boatman as he resolutely stood his ground in refusing to allow Lord Ram to board his boat, Laxman stood glaring at him angrily. It was too much for Laxman to tolerate someone as lowly and humble as an ordinary boatman refusing to obey Lord Ram's orders. Remember: It is the same Laxman who had no regrets or compunctions in upbraiding even the mighty sage Parashuram in Janakpur when the angry sage had come to threaten Lord Ram for breaking the bow of Lord Shiva. Yet Laxman somehow maintained a studied silence here in the case of Kewat unlike in the case of sage Parashuram where he had engaged in a hot verbal duel with the sage, using taunts and sarcasm made with impunity. But nevertheless, his eyes glowered at Kewat, and his expressions clearly indicated his annoyance at the poor boatman's stubbornness.

But why did Laxman not openly scold Kewat as he had done to Parashuram for defying Lord Ram? It is because while the sage had shown anger and haughtiness at Lord Ram and was threatening him with dire consequences for daring to break the bow, in the case of the boatman the situation was quite different. He was praying to Lord Ram, was humble, and was merely seeking to 'wash the feet of the Lord before allowing him to board the boat', and had also given a logical reason for wanting to do so. Further, he had offered to forgo his usual charges for ferrying the Lord across the river if the Lord agrees to let the boatman wash his feet. The boatman was prayerful, submissive, and standing humbly before the Lord with both hand held together

respectfully, while sage Parashuram had waved his battle-axe at Lord Ram and Laxman, had shouted and glared angrily at them, and had threatened to punish them by chopping off their heads. Obviously, there was no similarity.

But the attitude of Laxman had shaken the boatman from the inside, and he felt terrified that at any moment Laxman's fuse of anger would blow up, and he would kill him with a shot of arrow, for if the reputation of Lord Ram had spread far and wide, then there is little doubt that the nature of Laxman was also well known.

The boatman had such a rustic charm about him, and an aura of such simplicity and honesty around him, that whatever anger that Laxman may have had till now, simply vanished. How could Laxman raise his arms against an unarmed humble person who is just asking Lord Ram to allow him to wash his feet?

'Washing of the feet' of an honourable guest is a routine affair; it is a traditional gesture of courtesy and civility; there is nothing unusual about it. Hence, Laxman getting angry on this count would only cast him in poor light; so he thought it wise to keep quiet.

³This reference to Lord Ram as being the 'Lord of Tulsidas' is found elsewhere in Ram Charit Manas also—e.g. Baal Kand, Doha no. 196.]

सो०. सुनि केवट के बैन प्रेम लपेटे अटपटे ।

बिहसे करुनाएन चितइ जानकी लखन तन ॥ १०० ॥

sōraṭhā.

sunī kēbaṭa kē baina prēma lapēṭe aṭapaṭē.

bihasē karunā'aina cita'i jānakī lakhana tana. 100.

When Lord Ram heard these odd but simple, honest and rustic words of Kewat, the boatman, words that were laced with affection for the Lord, he felt very amused, and smiled while glancing at Sita and Laxman¹. (Sortha no. 100)

[Note—¹Lord Ram could sense the depth of affection and devotion that the boatman had in his heart when he made the demand to wash the Lord's feet; it was apparent in his eyes, his countenance, his bodily language, his demeanours. Though the boatman seemed to be rude and crude, but this was the way country folk are used to, this was the first taste of the sort of people and interactions Lord Ram and his companions would be encountering throughout their long journey through the countryside and the forested areas far beyond.

Kewat's response amused the Lord because the boatman had talked straightforward and frankly, without as much as asking for permission to speak, and without showing niceties of language or observing courtesies, but nevertheless making his stand clear and without leaving a trace of doubt. He had made it plain that in this part of the land, it is people like him who hold the key of the fort, and to deal with them is a different ball-game from the formalities of royal assemblies and their solemn environments to which the two princes, i.e. Lord Ram and Laxman, and the princess, Sita, were hitherto accustomed. So, they better learn and adapt fast!

Lord Ram looked and smiled at Sita and Laxman to tell them subtly to enjoy the situation presently, and to be prepared for what more was to come as time passed.]

चौ०. कृपासिंधु बोले मुसुकाई । सोइ करु जेहिं तव नाव न जाई ॥ १ ॥

बेगि आनु जल पाय पखारू । होत बिलंबु उतारहि पारू ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

krpāsindhu bōlē musukāī. sō'i karu jēnhi tava nāva na jāī. 1.

vēgi ānu jala pāya pakhārū. hōta bilambu utārahi pārū. 2.

Lord Ram, who was an ocean of mercy, kindness and grace (decided to fulfill Kewat's wishes and grant him joy, and hence he) smiled and replied: 'Well then, if what thee insist is the only way forward, then go ahead and do as thou thinkest fit and proper in order to protect thine boat from going away out of thy reach (as thee suspect it wouldst be by magically being turned into some lady if its wood touches the dust of mine feet). (1)

Make haste and bring in water to wash mine feet, and then take me across the river immediately, for it is getting too late.¹ (2)

[Note—¹Lord Ram was in a hurry to get to the other side of river Ganges for probably the following reasons:

(i) It was the first day when Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman would be walking on foot, because on the previous day they had rode the chariot. The sun was rising in the sky, and it was gradually getting hot. This would cause discomfort to Sita. So, the Lord wished to cross over at the earliest so that they can take some rest under the shade of some tree on the other bank.

(ii) Lord Ram had a hunch that Sumantra must have stopped someway up the road, contemplating what to do. He might change his mind to return to Ayodhya and come back; he would then fall at the feet of the Lord and clasp it firmly, not letting go of it till the time the Lord acceded to his request to allow him to accompany the Lord in his journey to the forest. It would create a piquant situation, for the Lord, who is famed for graciousness, compassion and mercy, would find it well-nigh impossible to rudely deal with Sumantra, and sternly turn his back on the old chief minister who was old enough to be like his own father.

(iii) Likewise, there was also the possibility that some of the citizens of Ayodhya whom the Lord left behind on the banks of river Tamsa last night, would have refused to return home, and some bright and enterprising amongst them would apply their intelligence and common sense to rightly guess the direction in which the chariot had proceeded from there. So, sooner or later they would too arrive on the bank of river Ganges to catch up with the Lord.

This probability was quite possible because somewhere they would meet Sumantra, who would then spill the bean about the Lord's location. Then the whole multitude would make a mad dash to reach Lord Ram before the Lord has had the time to escape across the river and vanish on the other side of the vast land.]

जासु नाम सुमिरत एक बारा । उतरहिं नर भवसिंधु अपारा ॥ ३ ॥

सोइ कृपालु केवटहि निहोरा । जेहिं जगु किय तिहु पगहु ते थोरा ॥ ४ ॥

jāsu nāma sumarata ēka bārā. utarahim nara bhavasindhu apārā. 3.
sō'i krpālu kēvaṭahi nihōrā. jēhim jagu kiya tihu pagahu tē thōrā. 4.

The Lord whose divine name has such stupendous mystical powers¹ that by merely remembering it even once, a human being is able to cross the vast and fathomless ocean of transmigration (bhavasindhu apārā) with ease, --- (3)

--- It is indeed such a mystery that the same merciful Lord would plead with an ordinary boatman to take him across a river (which no matter how revered it might have been but still was merely a thin strip of water when compared to the vastness of the Bhavsagar, the ocean of transmigration of the soul of a living being.

Besides this, it is also a matter of wonder that the Supreme Lord who had a cosmic presence as he could measure the whole creation in his two steps but still needed some place to put his third step down² (a allegory to an incident during the Vaman incarnation of Lord Vishnu), would need the Kewat's help to cross in earthly river! (4)

[Note—¹The divinity and glory of Lord Ram's holy name has been elucidated and praised in detail in (a) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 19—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 28; (b) Vinai Patrika, verse nos. 46, 65-70, 155-156; (c) Kavitawali Ramayan, Uttar Kand, verse nos. 9-93, 178; (d) Barvai Ramayan, Uttar Kand, verse nos. 49, 51, 56, 62.

²It ought to be noted that this verse clearly establishes the true identity of who Lord Ram was: verily, the Lord was an incarnation of Lord Vishnu because it was Lord Vishnu to whom this story pertains. The Lord had assumed the form of a dwarf mendicant known as 'Vaman' (pronounced "Vaaman") to visit the court of the legendary king Bali, and when the guest mendicant was offered by Bali anything he wished, the Lord had told the king that he needs nothing more but a parcel of land measuring not more than the area covered by his three steps. As soon as Bali accepted this apparently child-like request, the Lord expanded his body to cover the entire creation. Then in one step he measured the whole earth, in the second the rest of the creation, and when the land still fell short for the third step, Bali offered his own head and crown. Lord Vishnu was very pleased at Bali's devotion and granted him an abode in the nether world, with a guarantee that the Lord himself would act as his gatekeeper there.

The story of king Bali and Lord Vaman appears in Srimad Bhagwat, 8/15-23.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Doha no. 29 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it.

So therefore, had Lord Ram so wished, he could have just stepped on the other side of the river Ganges in the darkness of the night so no body would know what had happened. But it would be too supernatural an act for him to perform, and he was committed to live like an ordinary human prince on earth to conceal his identity to prevent the demons from getting a wind that the Lord was on his way to eliminate them.

This is the primary reason why Lord Ram pleaded with Kewat to take him across river Ganges here, and later on in the story he would similarly plead with the deity of the ocean for three days to allow him a passage to Lanka. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 57.}

पद नख निरखि देवसरि हरषी । सुनि प्रभु बचन मोहँ मति करषी ॥ ५ ॥
 केवट राम रजायसु पावा । पानि कठवता भरि लेइ आवा ॥ ६ ॥

pada nakha nirakhi dēvasari haraṣī. suni prabhu bacana mōham' mati karaṣī.

5.

kēvaṭa rāma rajāyasu pāvā. pāni kaṭhavatā bhari lē'i āvā. 6.

When the deity of river Ganges observed the toe nails of Lord Ram, and heard the words of Lord whereby he has allowed the boatman to wash his holy feet, it (the deity) felt exceptionally glad and fortunate. This rare honour mesmerized the deity's mind and filled its heart with exhilaration¹. (5)

No sooner Kewat received orders from Lord Ram, but he wasted no time, and immediately brought water in a bowl². (6)

[Note—¹Why was the deity so happy? It was because the toe of Lord Vishnu was the origin of this holy river Ganges, and hence as far as the deity was concerned, it was like its heavenly Father himself visiting it on earth to let it touch its Father's holy feet and feel blessed. After all, the river, which was originally flowing in the heaven as the 'river of the gods' (dēvasari) had, over time, become very polluted by sinful creatures taking bath in its waters. With Lord Ram's feet touching its waters now, the deity felt rejuvenated as if all its past burdens are about to be filtered and washed off.

²What kind of bowl or a large cup could it have been? Well, by all accounts it was made of wood. How come it was nothing but 'wood'? The reason is that Kewat wished to test if the touch of Lord Ram's feet transmewed this wooden bowl into something else, as he had been suspecting all along. If that came to be true, then he would merely lose a single bowl, but his precious asset, his boat, which was his livelihood, would be spared. If nothing happened to this bowl, than there was no need for further testing.

Why did he not bring one made of, say, metal, e.g. iron? Well, at present Lord Ram was living like a hermit, and hermits are supposed to carry 'wooden bowls', and are not supposed to touch iron pots. Kewat was so wise that he did not want to do anything on his part that would compel Lord Ram to violate established traditions and mandates of the scriptures.

The water which Kewat brought was obviously from river Ganges. After washing the Lord's holy feet, the fortunate boatman would sip a part of it himself, and share the rest with everyone, to make all eligible for deliverance and emancipation.

This particular event has been beautifully described in Kavitawali Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, verse nos. 7-10.]

अति आनंद उमगि अनुरागा । चरन सरोज पखारन लागा ॥ ७ ॥

बरषि सुमन सुर सकल सिहाहीं । एहि सम पुन्यपुंज कोउ नाहीं ॥ ८ ॥

ati ānanda umagi anurāgā. carana sarōja pakhārana lāgā. 7.
baraṣi sumana sura sakala sihāhīm. ēhi sama pun'yapuñja kō'u nāhīm. 8.

Overcome with ecstasy and full of excess of joy, riding on the surging wave of affection and love for the Lord, the boatman began to bathe or wash the holy lotus-like feet of Lord Ram with his own hands. (7)

When the gods in the heaven saw this, they showered flowers on the boatman, exclaiming in unison: 'Indeed, there is no one as lucky and as blessed as him in this world anywhere.'¹ (8)

[Note—¹The joy and happiness at washing the lotus-like feet of Lord Ram, from which drips the nectar of spiritual bliss and beatitude, has been described elsewhere also in Ram Charit Manas. For instance, Baal Kand, Chanda line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 324.]

दो०. पद पखारि जलु पान करि आपु सहित परिवार ।
पितर पारु करि प्रभुहि पुनि मुदित गयउ लेइ पार ॥ १०१ ॥
dōhā.

pada pakhāri jalu pāna kari āpu sahita parivāra.
pitara pāru kari prabhuhi puni mudita gaya'u lē'i pāra. 101.

Having washed the Lord's feet and drinking this holy water himself, as well as sharing it with his entire clan, the boatman ensured that everyone in his community, including his ancestors, became eligible for deliverance, emancipation and salvation.

Then, he most cheerfully took Lord Ram (and his companions, Sita and Laxman) across the river. (Doha no. 101)

चौ०. उतरि ठाढ़ भए सुरसरि रेता । सीय रामु गुह लखन समेता ॥ १ ॥
केवट उतरि दंडवत कीन्हा । प्रभुहि सकुच एहि नहिं कछु दीन्हा ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

utari ṭhāra bha'ē surasari rētā. sīyarāma guha lakhana samētā. 1.
kēvaṭa utari daṇḍavata kīnhā. prabhuhi sakuca ēhi nahim kachu dīnhā. 2.

Lord Ram, along with Sita, Guha Nishad and Laxman, got down from the boat on the other side of the river Ganges, and stood on the sands on its bank. (1)

The Kewat too got down and prostrated himself before the Lord.

Lord Ram, however, felt abashed and regretted that he has not given anything to the boatman by way of the latter's fare¹ for bringing the Lord and his companions across the river on his boat. (2)

[Note—¹Lord Ram was of a very courteous and obliging nature; he did not want anything for free. Whenever anyone meets the gracious Lord, the visitor or the guest

is never left without being given some or the other kind of gift or largess in return. Later on in the story we shall read that when Vibhishan, the brother of the demon king Ravana, came to meet Lord Ram, the Lord rewarded him by promising him the crown of Lanka at the end of the war, for the Lord told him that he never let's anyone unrewarded, even though Vibhishan had no such desire. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 8-10 that precede Doha no. 49.}

This was also the primary reason why Lord Ram took the side of Sugriv against his estranged brother Baali who had disinherited the former and thrown him out of the kingdom: the Lord met Sugriv on Mt. Rishyamook and befriended him. The Lord wished to reward Sugriv for his unilateral offer to help the Lord find and recover Sita who had been abducted by Ravana earlier. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Doha no. 4—to Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 7.}

Hence, Lord Ram thought to himself: “Well, this humble boatman is hesitating to ask me for his due fare as he knows I don’t have anything of value with me, and he doesn’t wish to embarrass me by asking for his fare. Observing my habit of a hermit, he has already told me he wants nothing in return for taking me across the river*. But it is very unlike my nature; but I don’t know now how I should recompense him. Well, let me wait a while and give him some more time to choose on what he wants, and then of course I will surely oblige him.” {*Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chanda no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 100.}]

पिय हिय की सिय जाननिहारी । मनि मुदरी मन मुदित उतारी ॥ ३ ॥

कहेउ कृपाल लेहि उतराई । केवट चरन गहे अकुलाई ॥ ४ ॥

piya hiya kī siya jānanihārī. mani mudarī mana mudita utārī. 3.
kahē'u krpāla lēhi utarā'ī. kēvaṭa carana gahē akulā'ī. 4.

Sita, meanwhile, observed the dilemma of the Lord, and she could guess rightly what thoughts were going on in his mind. So therefore, she cheerfully took off the gem-studded finger-ring* she wore (and offered it to Lord Ram to give it to the boatman as his fare)¹. (3)

The merciful Lord Ram accepted the ring and then offered it Kewat, saying politely: ‘Please take this finger-ring in lieu of the fare that is due to you for ferrying us across the river and bringing us on this side.’

No sooner Kewat heard the Lord volunteering to give the finger-ring to him as his fare, but he became highly upset and emotionally overwhelmed; he immediately fell down at the Lord’s feet and grasped them (as an outburst of grief that hinted to the Lord that the boatman loved him so much that the offer of the ring has touched a very sensitive nerve in his heart, that he has felt hurt by this offer, and that he would never accept it)². (4)

[Note—¹At the time of her marriage with Lord Ram, when the Lord and his grand marriage party were getting ready to depart from Jankapur, the bride’s home, to go to Ayodhya, Sita’s mother Sunayana had advised her that she should be always vigilant towards the needs of her husband, Lord Ram, and do according to what his wish was*. Sita had fully fulfilled her obligations here—for her husband wished to give something to the boatman as a fare for his boat, and though he did not express his

desire in clear terms, yet Sita could sense what was in his mind. So he immediately took off her ring to offer it to Lord Ram. {*Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 334.}

²In the first place, Kewat was well aware of who Lord Ram was, and the fact that Lord Ram had nothing of value with him as he had been ordered by his father to go to the forest attired as a hermit; and in the second place he had already told the Lord that he does not want anything in return for ferrying him across the river. The poor boatman was as upset by the news of the innocent Lord Ram being banished to the forest for no fault of his as were the other citizens of Ayodhya. He empathized with the Lord from the core of his heart, and his heart pained as if a spear was driven through it when he saw that Sita had taken off her own ring to be offered as fare to the boatman. After all, he was not so cruel or selfish or pervert or evil a person as to stoop low to the extent of extracting his meagre fare of some worldly pennies from someone in the state in which Lord Ram and his wife Sita and his brother Laxman were at present. It would be horrible and demonic for Kewat to even think of it, where therefore was the question of accepting it.

Hence, when Lord Ram offered Sita's finger-ring to Kewat in lieu of his fare, the poor boatman felt that his heart has been wrung in a vice-like grip of grief and distress.

What he told Lord Ram hereafter was a simple and rustic method of summing up the desire of great sages, saints, hermits and ascetics: for the only wish these exalted souls have is to attain liberation and deliverance from this mortal world and its cycle of transmigration.

In his simple and rustic style, Kewat has also shown us how a true devotee ought to think and what he ought to seek from the Lord in his prayers: we should discard our tendency to seek worldly things, we should not hanker after such desires, and we should neglect all things material even if they are offered for free, and instead we will be wise to opt for spiritual rewards in the form of the grace of the Lord by praying to him and seeking nothing but his blessings on us, for then the Lord would feel so happy and obliged that he would go ahead by rewarding us in his own way, which surely would be countless times more valuable and worthy than what we would have got if we had been stupid enough to open our mouths and tell him what we wish in the very beginning.

*Regarding this finger-ring, a very interesting development has quietly happened here, and it is often missed being noticed because in none of the versions of the story of the Ramayana it is specifically mentioned what happened to it after Kewat declined to accept it.

Well, let us first of all remember that this finger-ring belonged to Sita, and not to Lord Ram. Had Lord Ram himself been wearing any ring on his finger, there was no need for Sita to take off her own ring to be offered to Kewat as his fare. This fact clearly proves that Lord Ram had no ring of his own. Now herein comes the interesting part concerning this ring—what happened to it once Kewat refused to accept it, and what crucial role would this humble finger-ring play in the overall picture of the story of the Ramayana?

The answer is as interesting as the query itself: We shall read later on in the story that when Lord Ram had dispatched Hanuman to Lanka in search of Sita, the Lord had given his messenger a 'finger-ring' to be given to Sita as a token@ that would help her to be certain that this stranger, i.e. Hanuman, who approaches her in

an alien land is indeed a true messenger of Lord Ram, and not some demon trying to cheat her. To wit, the finger-ring served to establish Hanuman's identity before Sita. And as soon as Sita saw this ring, she was stunned, as a duplicate could not be made, and hence the ring must surely have come from Lord Ram, and no one else. She knew that there was only one such ring in existence, and it was in the possession of her dear husband, Lord Ram#. She recalled an incident of long time back when she had taken off her own finger-ring and had offered it to Lord Ram to give it to the boatman, the Kewat, in lieu of the fare for ferrying the Lord, Sita and Laxman across the river Ganges, and when Kewat declined to accept it, the Lord had quietly put it on his own finger for use later on.

Now, come to think of it, there is no other explanation of the developments except the one given herein above. If Lord Ram had no personal finger-ring of his own which he could offer to Kewat, and Sita had to offer her own ring to the Lord instead, and then had Sita taken back the ring after Kewat refused to take it, then from where did Lord Ram get the ring which he gave to Hanuman as an identity token, and why was Sita so surprised when she saw it; it was because she could immediately recognize that it was her own ring?

{Refer: Ram Charit Manas, @Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 9-11 that precede Doha no. 23; and #Sundar Kand, Doha no. 12 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that follow it.}]

नाथ आजु मैं काह न पावा । मिटे दोष दुख दारिद दावा ॥ ५ ॥
बहुत काल मैं कीन्हि मजूरी । आजु दीन्ह बिधि बनि भलि भूरी ॥ ६ ॥

nātha āju mair̥ kāha na pāvā. miṭē dōṣa dukha dārida dāvā. 5.
bahuta kāla mair̥ kīnhi majūrī. āju dīnha bidhi bani bhali bhūrī. 6.

Kewat replied (in a choked voice that expressed his emotional state of mind, of his excess of joy at having had the privilege of personally taking Lord Ram, who was none but the Supreme Lord in that form, across the river, of his spiritual ecstasy at having had the rarest of rare honour of sipping the water sanctified by washing the Lord's feet in it that would grant him eternal beatitude and bliss, not only to himself but also to his entire family and community, and now having the chance to ask the Lord whatsoever he would wish to have): 'Oh Lord, what is left there in this world which I have not got today! All my sins, all my shortcomings, and all my mistakes in life, as well as the greatest of sorrows and grief, along with their accompanying torments and sufferings, that had been till now and would have been my share in life in the future—well, every sort of my misfortune and all the ill-fate that have been my bane, they have been eradicated today. (5)

I have been toiling for a very long period of time in my life (and was barely able to make two ends meet for all my efforts). Today, fortunately, the Creator has been exceptionally favourable upon me as he has granted me largesse with a bag full of it; he has compensated for all the shortcomings in my earnings till now, and has granted me so much that I would not need anything in future too¹. (6)

[Note—¹Kewat told Lord Ram: "Oh Lord, listen. The difficulties of life of a poor man like myself is known only to him, for he is barely able to feed his family and make

two ends meet*. I have been fishing, which I am aware is not a noble profession or trade, and I have been ferrying passengers ever since I became old enough to row this boat. But oh Lord, today I have reaped such a rich harvest that I have become an envy of everyone else. Then tell me, dear Lord, what more wouldst I want? Why doth thee embarrass me by offering this petty ring for which I have no use, nor do I care. Well, if thou art so eager to pay me for mine services, then so be it: sure, pay me fully, but in the way it suits thine exalted stature, and not like some ordinary traveller who I have been tired of taking across the river since ages, and with whom I have become fed up with hankering for my fare. Thou art a ‘prince’ and the ‘future king of Ayodhya’, and not only that, thou art the ‘Supreme Lord’ of the world. Say then, a small finger-ring doth naught behoove thine exalted stature at all, does it?” {*The miseries of a poor man’s life has been called the greatest suffering a person is subjected to in this world in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 13 that precedes Doha no. 121.}

A similar feeling of ecstasy and state of mind is experienced by Hanuman when he met Lord Ram in the forest. Hanuman too had fell at the feet of the Lord and clasped them, saying he is extremely privileged to have met his dear Lord, has attained the reward of having life in this world, and wants nothing else. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 2; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 3.}

अब कछु नाथ न चाहिअ मोरें । दीनदयाल अनुग्रह तोरें ॥ ७ ॥

फिरती बार मोहि जो देबा । सो प्रसादु में सिर धरि लेबा ॥ ८ ॥

aba kachu nātha na cāhi'a mōrēm. dīnadayāla anugraha tōrēm. 7.
phiratī bāra mōhi jē dēbā. sō prasādu mair̥ sira dhari lēbā. 8.

I don't want anything more now. Oh Lord, this is my earnest prayer to you (not to insist in giving me anything against my wish). (7)

Yet, if however, thou wouldst wish to give me something, do it while thou art returning home, for then I wouldst gladly accept as a blessing from thee whatever thou wouldst wish to give me.¹ (8)

[Note—¹This shows the greatness and compassion of this ordinary man's heart. As has been noted in a note previously, Kewat knew that at this point of time Lord Ram was himself under emotional stress as he and his wife and brother have been sent to the forest in the habit of a hermit, being suddenly disinherited from a great kingdom and not allowed to carry anything of value with them. It would be nothing but cruelty and greed and perversion of the most contemptible kind to accept Sita's finger-ring at this juncture. However, Kewat also did not want to bring an end to his relationship with the Lord is such a short way—so he was very clever in saying that whatever the Lord would give him on his return journey home, he would accept it. This ensured that Lord Ram would come to him once again. And the Lord did fulfill Kewat's wish, for while on his way back to Ayodhya from Lanka, the Lord, along with all his companions, had come especially to visit Kewat—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-12 and Chanda line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 121.

And what did Lord Ram give Kewat as his due at the time of his return journey home? Well, we read in the story of Ram Charit Manas that at the time of returning home from his successful campaign in Lanka, Lord Ram had ordered the air-plane named Pushpak, in which he and all his companions were flying home from Lanka, to take a detour and come to the bank of river Ganges where earlier Lord Ram had met both the boatman Kewat as well as the chief of the community, i.e. Guha Nishad. As soon as the news of the Lord's arrival spread, sure enough all his earlier acquaintances rushed forward to welcome him, and prominent amongst them was surely Guha Nishad, but Kewat surely too was in the party. It is clearly narrated in Ram Charit Manas that Guha Nishad called everyone no sooner he learnt of the Lord's arrival. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 121.}

Thereafter, Lord Ram brought them to Ayodhya with him aboard the Pushpak air-plane, showed them all the courtesies he would show to his special guests of honour, called Nishad and his companions (read "Kewat) his dear friends who were as dear to him as his own brother Bharat, and after the Lord's coronation, the Lord richly rewarded them with gifts and sent them back home with a word from the Lord to keep coming back to Ayodhya to meet him whenever they wished, and to remember that the Lord was their friend forever—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 20.

It ought to be clearly noted here that the name of "Kewat" is not specifically mentioned in the text in the context of Lord Ram paying a courtesy return visit to the community of boatmen while on his way back home, but a single line would suffice to plug this gap—which is Lanka Kand's Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 121, where we read that no sooner Guha Nishad, who was the head of this community, heard of Lord Ram's arrival, he immediately summoned all his kith and kin and community members who were scattered on the banks of the river Ganges at that time. Obviously, this "Kewat" of ours definitely occupied a place of pride in the party that assembled to welcome the Lord back.

That said, even if spoken from the limited worldly point of view, was it not nevertheless a thousand times more important and honourable and valuable for Kewat to have this privilege of meeting Lord Ram again on his way back home than if he had accepted a single finger-ring earlier as his fare for taking Lord Ram across river Ganges, and forgotten forever? Surely, Lord Ram was indebted to Kewat, so on landing on the banks of river Ganges, it is certain that the Lord showed Kewat special treatment alongside that shown to Guha Nishad.

Besides this worldly honour, Lord Ram granted him the panacea of all blessings—for the Lord granted him the spiritual gem known as 'Bhakti', i.e. the blessing of having devotion for the Lord. This blessing is the best a creature can ever expect to have, and Lord Ram has himself endorsed this fact to the saintly crow Kaagbhusund. This is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 84—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 85.]

दो०. बहुत कीन्ह प्रभु लखन सियँ नहिं कछु केवटु लेइ ।

बिदा कीन्ह करुनायतन भगति बिमल बरु देइ ॥ १०२ ॥

dōhā.

bahuta kīnha prabhu lakhana siyam̐ nahim̐ kachu kēvaṭu lē'i.
bidā kīnha karunāyatana bhagati bimala baru dē'i. 102.

Lord Ram, Laxman and Sita tried many means to make Kewat change his determination and accept something (such as the finger-ring, or anything else they could afford at that time), but the wise boatman refused to concede.

Lord Ram, who was an embodiment of mercy, compassion and kindness, was very much overwhelmed by Kewat's gesture and the nobility of the latter's heart. So Lord Ram blessed Kewat by granting him the spiritual boon of having devotion for the Lord, and then bid him farewell. (Doha no. 102)

[Note—When Lord Ram was certain that no worldly thing would be too tempting to attract Kewat, the Lord granted him the best of all rewards, nay, the panacea of all rewards, which was the boon of Bhakti or devotion.

Later on in the story we would come across a similar incident when Lord Ram offered the saintly crow named Kaagbhusund all sorts of boons, but when the saint refused everything and insisted on having nothing but Bhakti, it pleased Lord Ram very much, and the Lord praised Kaagbhusund for his wisdom. This episode is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 83—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 85.]

चौ०. तब मज्जनु करि रघुकुलनाथा । पूजि पारथिव नायउ माथा ॥ १ ॥
सियँ सुरसरिहि कहेउ कर जोरी । मातु मनोरथ पुरउबि मोरी ॥ २ ॥
पति देवर सँग कुसल बहोरी । आइ करौं जेहिं पूजा तोरी ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

taba majjanu kari raghukulanāthā. pūji pāṛathiva nāya'u māthā. 1.
siyam̐ surasarihi kahē'u kara jōrī. mātu manōratha pura'ubi mōrī. 2.
pati dēvara saṅga kusala bahōrī. ā'i karauṁ jēhim̐ pūjā tōrī. 3.

Then (after sending Kewat, the boatman, back), Lord Ram, the Lord of the illustrious race of king Raghu (raghukulanāthā), took a purification bath (in river Ganges). After that, the Lord moulded a Shiva-lingam (which is an icon representing Lord Shiva) out of wet earth (pāṛathiva), and offered his worship to it (i.e. to Lord Shiva through the medium of this earthen Shiva-lingam)¹. (1)

Meanwhile, Sita offered her worship to the holy river Ganges by folding her hands and touching both her palms in a respectful manner to pray: 'Oh revered Mother (mātu)! Please be kind to bless me that my wishes are fulfilled in full, --- (2)

--- So that I may come back happily to offer worship to you once again, on my return journey, with my dear husband and brother-in-law.² (3)

[Note—¹It is interesting to note that later on in the story, Lord Ram would offer similar worship to an earthen Shiva-lingam just before his departure for Lanka across the newly built bridge on the ocean—apropos: Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-6 that precede Doha no. 2.

To wit, Lord Ram and Lord Shiva had great respect for each other, for on the one hand Lord Ram has expressly said that no one is as dear to him as is Lord Shiva@, and on the other hand, Lord Shiva always repeats Lord Ram's holy name as his preferred Mantra (spiritual formula) at all times of day and night#. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, @Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 2; #Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 19; (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 46; (iii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 108.}

It is a tradition that a devotee would form a temporary Lingam of Lord Shiva by moulding it from wet mud or earth on the banks of a holy river at a pilgrim site, offer worship and prayers to it after taking a bath, and then dismantle the Lingam and disperse it into the water of the river. But in the case of Lord Ram, it is not mentioned anywhere what he did with this particular Shiva Lingam, though the one he established prior to his departure for Lanka was left intact, and it came down the ages to be a revered Shiva Lingam known as 'Rameshwaram', which is worshipped till this day.

²Sita prayed to the deity of river Ganges that she be blessed with the boon of overall happiness and general well-being so that all of the three of them, i.e. Sita, Lord Ram and Laxman, could return happily and offer worship to river Ganges once again on their way back home from the forest.

A very brief reference to Sita offering worship to river Ganges is mentioned in Veda Vyas' "Adhyatma Ramayan", Ayodhya Kand, Canto 6, verse nos. 21-22.]

सुनि सिय बिनय प्रेम रस सानी । भइ तब बिमल बारि बर बानी ॥ ४ ॥
 सुनु रघुबीर प्रिया बैदेही । तव प्रभाउ जग बिदित न केही ॥ ५ ॥
 लोकप होहिं बिलोकत तोरें । तोहि सेवहिं सब सिधि कर जोरें ॥ ६ ॥

sunī siya binaya prēma rasa sānī. bha'i taba bimala bāri bara bānī. 4.
 sunu raghubīra priyā baidēhī. tava prabhā'u jaga bidita na kēhī. 5.
 lōkapa hōhirṁ bilōkata tōrēm. tōhi sēvahirṁ saba sidhi kara jōrēm. 6.

Hearing Sita's prayers that were imbued with affection (both for the holy river Ganges, as well as for her husband Lord Ram and brother-in-law Laxman), and were said with all sincerity and humility, the deity of the river Ganges spoke in an disembodied voice from the middle of the water: --- (4)

'Listen Vaidehi (Sita); thou art the dear consort of Lord Ram, the brave warrior of the Raghu-race¹ (of Ayodhya)! Say, who in this world is not aware of thine glories and greatness²? (5)

By thine glance an ordinary creature can attain the exalted stature of being the custodian of the whole world³. Nay, all the Siddhis (mystical powers) are also obedient to thee⁴ so much so that they stand in attendance before thee with their hands folded in a prayerful and submissive manner (as if they art all waiting for thy commands that they wouldst carry out forthwith). (6)

[Note—¹The use of the word 'Vaidehi' for Sita is significant here, and so is the word 'Raghubir' for Lord Ram. The word "Vaidehi" means the daughter of king Videha,

i.e. king Janak of Janakpur. The word also means “to be without a physical body”; or to be unaware of the physical body and remain oblivious of its joys and sufferings because the concerned person is so spiritually enlightened that he or she knows that the Atma, the Spirit, the ‘true self’ of all living beings, is pure consciousness, and that it is distinct and separate from the gross physical body in which it lives. This exalted state of mind is called ‘self-realisation’, and king Janak was called “Videha” precisely because of this fact.

In the present context of Sita, however, the word implies that being the daughter of such an exalted and enlightened father as king Videha, Sita too had scant regard for the physical comforts and pleasures of the body, and surely it was true as by her own assertion none of the hardships of the forest would bother her in the least. This is clear when she told Lord Ram earlier that she is not at all concerned by any of the troubles of the forest, as all such troubles and hardships and sufferings are limited to the gross physical body, and not to the soul which will be at peace when Lord Ram would be with her all times of her life in the forest. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precede Doha no. 65—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 66.}

Now, as for the employ of the epithet “Raghubir” for Lord Ram, it was to be used by the deity of river Ganges to reassure Sita that with such a great, brave, courageous and invincible warrior as Lord Ram, the Lord of the great race of kings of Ayodhya, by her side, what need does she have for any kind of worry, for definitely no harm can ever come her way with Lord Ram by her side to give her protection.

²The glory and fame of Sita was not something ordinary; the whole world was aware of her as well as her husband, Lord Ram. This fact has been explicitly stressed and reiterated in Ram Charit Manas in the context of the marriage ceremony of Sita—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 251 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 262; (iii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 265.

Similarly, the glories of Lord Ram and Laxman were equally famed throughout the world—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 292.

³Sita was the divine Mother Goddess, and Lord Ram was the Supreme Being himself. So there was no wonder they had this mystical power and authority as reiterated by the deity of river Ganges. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 148; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 187.

⁴As for the various Siddhis eager to serve Sita and obey her commands, refer to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 306—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 307; (b) Uttar Kand, (ii) Doha no. 24.]

तुम्ह जो हमहि बड़ि बिनय सुनाई । कृपा कीन्हि मोहि दीन्हि बड़ाई ॥ ७ ॥
तदपि देबि मैं देबि असीसा । सफल होन हित निज बागीसा ॥ ८ ॥

tumha jō hamahi barī binaya sunā'ī. kṛpā kīnhi mōhi dīnhi barā'ī. 7.
tadapi dēbi mairi dēbi asīsā. saphala hōpana hita nija bāgīsā. 8.

Such being thy exalted stature, oh Sita, that thou havest chosen to pray to me (i.e. the patron deity of river Ganges) is to show thine grace upon me, and I am very grateful and thankful to thee for extending such great honour to me, though I am not competent to bless thee. (7)

Yet, oh goddess (Sita), since it is thy wish, so be it. Therefore, in accordance to thine desires, and in order also to make mine own words bear fruits, I do bless thee with all successes and welfare¹. (8)

[Note—¹The patron deity of the water of river Ganges told Sita: “Oh goddess Sita; though I am not at all competent to bless you, for you are much superior to me in every respect, but still since you have desired me to bless you, I think it is my honour and great privilege to do so, and hence I whole-heartedly extend my warmest wishes to you, and bless you all successes and a fruitful journey. I know that this is merely a formality, for Lord Ram is the Supreme Being who is going to the forest with a divine mandate to eliminate the scourge of the demons, and this being the case it is a forgone conclusion that this journey to the forest will be a resounding success. So, whether or not I bless you and your husband and brother-in-law, all things are going to turn out positive. Nevertheless, I feel proud that now once I bless you with success in accomplishment of the main purpose of your journey to the forest, all credit for such success would come to me; the world would say ‘Look, river Ganges had blessed Sita with success, and how true has this blessing been!’

I am lucky that I am getting this credit for free, so therefore, I am gladly blessing you in accordance with your wish.”]

दो०. प्राननाथ देवर सहित कुसल कोसला आइ ।
पूजिहि सब मनकामना सुजसु रहिहि जग छाड़ ॥ १०३ ॥
dōhā.

prānanātha dēvara sahita kusala kōsalā ā'i.
pūjahī saba manakāmanā sujasu rahihi jaga chā'i. 103.

The patron deity of the water of the river Ganges told Sita by way of blessing her: ‘You shalt, along with thine dear husband (Lord Ram) and brother-in-law (Laxman) wilt surely come back happily to return to thine home at Ayodhya¹. I honour thy wish in this regard, and bless thee that all thine wishes wouldst be fully fulfilled, and the great achievement attained during this journey and its successful completion wouldst establish thy fame and spread thine glories all over the world.’ (Doha no. 103)

[Note—¹This was what Sita had precisely wished to be blessed about—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 herein above that precede this Doha no. 103.

Indeed, the success of the campaign to free Sita from her captivity in Lanka, and the elimination of the famed demon army led by the almost invincible king Ravana, who had struck terror in the heart of the gods too, established this story of

Lord Ram going to the forest with Sita and Laxman, and the sufferings that Sita had to endure at Lanka, in the annals of history as one of its kind that ever was told, for it stood out for the many virtues that were highlighted in the story, such as that of valour, courage, bravery, resilience, fight against all odds, and the victory of good over evil, as well as many other virtues such as brotherly love, obedience to one's parents, faithfulness and commitment and obligation towards one's duty, and upholding the principles of Dharma.

{Refer: (a) Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 119; (ii) Doha no. 121-a; Uttar Kand, (iii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 2; (v) Chaupai line nos. 1-2, 5 that precede Doha no. 129; and

(b) Geetawali Ramayan, Uttar Kand, verse no. 13.}]

चौ०. गंग बचन सुनि मंगल मूला । मुदित सीय सुरसरि अनुकूला ॥ १ ॥

तब प्रभु गुहहि कहेउ घर जाहू । सुनत सूख मुखु भा उर दाहू ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

gaṅga bacana suni maṅgala mūlā. mudita sīya surasari anukulā. 1.

taba prabhu guhahi kahē'u ghara jāhū. sunata sūkha mukhu bhā ura dāhū. 2.

Hearing such favourable and auspicious words of the deity of the river Ganges, words that were the harbingers of all good luck and successes, Sita felt very exhilarated with the thought that the holy river was favourable towards her, and has blessed her with success in the mission. (1)

Then, Lord Ram asked Guha Nishad to return home¹. No sooner Nishad heard the Lord's request, but his face became pale, his mouth parched dry, and his heart was afire with an intense heat of grief at the very thought of returning home and suffering separation from Lord Ram². (2)

[Note—¹We must remember that Guha Nishad had accompanied Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman on the boat when they crossed the river to land on its other side. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 102.

²To wit, Nishad had planned to accompany Lord Ram on his long journey to the forest, and when the Lord turned Sumantra back from the other side of the river Ganges but allowed Nishad to accompany him on the boat to cross the river, he was almost certain that it meant the Lord had no objection to him accompanying the Lord on his journey onwards to the forest. So therefore, when Lord Ram asked Nishad to return home, surely the latter was taken aback. The very thought of leaving Lord Ram and his companions alone created great torment in the heart of Guha as if it was set on fire due to grief.]

दीन बचन गुह कह कर जोरी । बिनय सुनहु रघुकुलमनि मोरी ॥ ३ ॥

नाथ साथ रहि पंथु देखाई । करि दिन चारि चरन सेवकाई ॥ ४ ॥

जेहिं बन जाइ रहब रघुराई । परनकुटी मैं करबि सुहाई ॥ ५ ॥

तब मोहि कहँ जसि देब रजाई । सोइ कहिउँ रघुबीर दोहाई ॥ ६ ॥

dīna bacana guha kaha kara jōrī. binaya sunahu raghukulamani mōrī. 3.
nātha sātha rahi panthu dēkhā'ī. kari dina cāri carana sēvakā'ī. 4.
jēhim bana jā'i rahaba raghurā'ī. paranakuṭī mairi karabi suhā'ī. 5.
taba mōhi kham' jasi dēba rajā'ī. sō'i kariha'um' raghubīra dōhā'ī. 6.

Guha joined the palms of his hands in a prayerful mode and said in a very pathetic tone to Lord Ram: 'Oh Lord who is the gem (i.e. the best and the most exalted member) of the illustrious family of kings descending from Raghu of Ayodhya (raghukulamani), please be kind to listen to my humble prayers. (3)

Lord, I wish to accompany you for a few more days, say some four days or thereabouts¹, in order to be able to show you the path ahead, and at the same time be able to offer my services at your feet for some more time. (4)

In whichever part of the forest you finally decided to live, I shall erect a pleasant and comfortable thatched hut for your dwelling at the place. (5)

Thereafter, oh Lord Ram, the brave Lord of the Raghus (raghubīra), I promise thee that whatever thou shalt command me to do then, I shalt gladly obey thee.' (6)

[Note—¹Guha Nishad mentions 'four or thereabouts' days because he thought that if he said he wished to accompany the Lord more than a reasonable length of time, the Lord was sure to decline his offer.

Then, by saying that 'he would show the Lord the path ahead, and would erect a hut for his dwelling', Guha Nishad thought that it was the best way to convince Lord Ram to allow Guha to accompany him, as surely it would help the Lord to find out the right path to the forest, because the path ahead had many intersections and diversions, and with Guha with him the Lord would not need to ask any stranger which way to proceed.

Further, the offer of erecting a thatched hut seemed to be an enticing offer which the Lord would find difficult to resist, because surely he would need some shelter in the wilderness, and as surely he did not know how to erect a hut, as being a prince he is not expected to have idea of such things.

Now, let us pause at this point for a brief moment to find out 'who actually would erect the thatched hut where Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman lived in the forest'? The answer is found in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 133 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede it. We discover here that it were the gods themselves who came disguised as the Kols and Kirats, the hill-dwelling tribes, to erect a beautiful thatched hut for Lord Ram's comfortable stay at Chitrakoot.

How beautiful was the Lord's thatched dwelling? We learn about it when Guha Nishad pointed out to Bharat the place where Lord Ram lived in Chitrakoot, and described its charm as he observed it from a small hill at a distance. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 237 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it.]

सहज सनेह राम लखि तासू । संग लीन्ह गुह हृदयँ हुलासू ॥ ७ ॥

पुनि गुहँ ग्याति बोलि सब लीन्हे । करि परितोषु बिदा तब कीन्हे ॥ ८ ॥

sahaja sanēha rāma lakhi tāsū. saṅga līnha guha hṛdaya hulāsū. 7.
puni guham'gyāti bōli saba līnhē. kari paritōṣu bidā taba kīnhē. 8.

When Lord Ram observed the natural sense of affection and love for him that Guha Nishad had in his heart, the Lord agreed to take him along, and the Lord's permission filled Guha's heart with excess of joy and exhilaration. (7)

Thereafter, Guha summoned all his kinsmen (who had assembled nearabout), and after satisfying them in whatever way it was deemed fit, he asked them to return home¹. (8)

[Note—¹A few very interesting observations are to be made here.

First: Guha was the chief of the boatman community, so wherever he went all the members of that community would assemble to show respect to him. Here, those boatmen who lived on the other side of the river Ganges, opposite from the bank from where Lord Ram and his companions had boarded the boat to cross the river, gathered in large numbers when they heard that their chief, i.e. Guha Nishad, has come with some special guests, who in this case were Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman.

Meanwhile, the news of Lord Ram being sent to the forest for fourteen years had already spread far and wide like wildfire. So in all probability everyone knew who these special guests were. The personalities of Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman were outstanding, for let us not forget that they were born as great princes and a princess of mighty kingdoms. So therefore, they stood out in a crowd of ordinary people.

Second: Guha told his kinsmen that he will come back soon, after seeing Lord Ram till the edge of the forest. So, they need not worry about him, for he won't be away for more than a few days.

Third: Most probably, a number of other boatmen may have offered to accompany Guha to help him as the need arose. They would come in handy to act as guards to protect Lord Ram and his company from any untoward incident in the strange and hostile land beyond the territorial boundaries of Ayodhya. His kinsmen would also help Guha to erect a hut for Lord Ram whenever it was needed. But it would not be acceptable by Lord Ram, so Guha politely told his friends to return home and let him alone go with Lord Ram. Guha told them that they ought not to worry on any count, for his is competent enough to take care of everything as demanded by the situation. After all, Guha knew very well that Lord Ram would never agree that a crowd should follow him to the forest, because it would violate the terms of his coming to the forest as a 'hermit'. Had Lord Ram so wished, that he be surrounded by a crowd, he would not have left the citizens of Ayodhya sleeping in the night, and quietly escaped from out of their reach.]

दो०. तब गनपति सिव सुमिरि प्रभु नाइ सुरसरिहि माथ ।

सखा अनुज सिय सहित बन गवनु कीन्ह रघुनाथ ॥ १०४ ॥

dōhā.

taba ganapati siva sumiri prabhu nā'i surasarihi mātha.
sakhā anuja siyā sahita bana gavanu kīnha raghunātha. 104.

Then, having remembered Lord Ganesh and Lord Shiva and mentally paying his obeisance to them¹, and thereafter bowing his head to the holy river Ganges, the river of the Gods, Lord Ram, the Lord of the Raghus, moved onwards on his journey to the forest, accompanied by his friend (Guha Nishad), his younger brother (Laxman) and Sita. (Doha no. 104)

[Note—¹Lord Ram had offered his respects to both Ganesh and Shiva even at the time of departure from Ayodhya—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 81. At that time, he had prayed to goddess Parvati, the consort of Lord Shiva, and now he offers the same prayer to the goddess who was the deity of river Ganges.]

चौ०. तेहि दिन भयउ बिटप तर बासू । लखन सखाँ सब कीन्ह सुपासू ॥ १ ॥

प्रात प्रातकृत करि रघुराई । तीरथराजु दीख प्रभु जाई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

tēhi dina bhaya'u biṭapa tara bāsū. lakhana sakhāṁ saba kīnha supāsū. 1.
prāta prātakṛta kari raghurāī. tīratharāju dīkha prabhu jāī. 2.

[Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman, accompanied by Guha Nishad, moved along the path as advised by Guha.]

At the end of the day, all of them took rest under the shade of a tree. Laxman and Lord Ram's friend (i.e. Guha) made all necessary arrangements for a reasonably comfortable stay for Lord Ram and Sita¹. (1)

At dawn the next morning, Lord Ram (raghurāī) did his routine chores, and then the company proceeded ahead. By-and-by, the Lord came to the vicinity (literally 'viewing distance'—tīratharāju dīkha) of Prayag, also known as 'Tirtharaj' (literally meaning a 'king amongst all the holy places', so-called because here three sacred rivers have their confluence, lending the site a great religious value)². (2)

[Note—¹We have read earlier too that Lord Ram and Sita took rest under a tree where Laxman and Guha Nishad had made a temporary resting-mat of leaves and grass spread over the ground for the Lord and Sita to relax for the night—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 89 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precede it.

²At Prayag, or "Tirtharaj", three sacred rivers, i.e. Ganges, Yamuna and Saraswati, meet each other. Hence, the site is also called 'Triveni'—where one can find three rivers meeting each other and flowing together. Symbolically, the union of the three rivers stand for unison of all the three aspects of creation—such as the presence of the Trinity Gods (Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, Shiva the concluder), the three phases of life (past, present, future), the three Gunas (Sata, Raja and Tama gunas, representing the best, the medium and the worst characters in all living beings),

the three divisions of creation (heaven, earth and underworld, represented by Ganges, Yamuna and Saraswati respectively).

It is believed that one gets great religious merit by bathing at this place.]

Sage Bharadwaj had his hermitage here, and during the Hindu month of Magha, roughly January, when the sun enters the asterism of Capricorn, a great religious congregation is traditionally held here. Religious and spiritual discourses are given for the benefit of all visitors. It was here that once sage Yagyawalkya had told sage Bharadwaj the divine story of Lord Ram, that came to be known as the Ramayana. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 44—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 47.}

During his visit to this sacred place, Lord Ram too met sage Bharadwaj—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 106.]

सचिव सत्य श्रद्धा प्रिय नारी । माधव सरिस मीतु हितकारी ॥ ३ ॥

चारि पदारथ भरा भंडारू । पुन्य प्रदेस देस अति चारू ॥ ४ ॥

saciva satya śraddhā priya nārī. mādhaba sarisa mītu hitakārī. 3.

cāri padāratha bharā bhamḍāru. pun'ya pradēsa dēsa ati cāru. 4.

[In the following verses, the glories and holiness of Prayag or Tirtharaj have been outlined in a symbolic manner.]

The patron deity of this sacred site is like the ‘King’ amongst the deities of all pilgrim places. This symbolic King has ‘Truth’ as his chief minister, ‘Shradha’ (i.e. faith, conviction; firmness of belief in the holiness of the place and its ability to grant spiritual merit) is his consort, and his friend, who does good to all and is benevolent by nature, is represented by the god known as ‘Madhav’ (one of the names for Lord Vishnu) who is consecrated at this place¹. (3)

This place is a storehouse of all the four great rewards that a creature can expect to have for doing meritorious deeds and leading an auspicious life—viz. Artha (financial well-being), Dharma (auspiciousness and religious merit), Kaam (fulfillment of all desires), and Moksha (attainment of liberation and deliverance, of emancipation and salvation, of eternal bliss and beatitude).

Verily indeed and in all sooth, this place is the symbolic ‘capital place’ for all religious merits and goodness, and it being so, it is very pleasant to behold². (4)

[Note—¹The three important symbols of holiness are all present here—viz. Truth, Faith, and the Supreme Being in the form of Madhav. ‘Madhav’ is the form of the Lord that is regarded as the patron god of Prayag.

²To wit, since Prayag is like a ‘King’ of all holy sites, it also represents all the best one expects from a religious place. Indeed, with ‘Truth’ and ‘Faith’ as the chief characters, all evil and nasty things shun coming here. This being the case, the place is beautiful and pleasant because all the filth associated with corruption and evilness don’t find any ground to flourish here.]

छेत्रु अगम गढु गाढ़ सुहावा । सपनेहुँ नहिं प्रतिपच्छिन्ह पावा ॥ ५ ॥
सेन सकल तीरथ बर बीरा । कलुष अनीक दलन रनधीरा ॥ ६ ॥

chētra agama gaṛhu gāṛha suhāvā. sapanēhum' nahim pratipacchinha pāvā. 5.
sēna sakala tīratha barā bīrā. kaluṣa anīka dalana ranadhīrā. 6.

The place is so robust in its spiritual goodness and religious holiness that it is like an impregnable and strong fort which no enemy can ever overrun it even in a dream¹. (5)

The deities of all other religious places are like the different commanders of the 'King' known as Tirtharaj who represents Prayag, and together their armies help to defeat a variety of enemies symbolizing different kinds of sins and evilness in the world; they help the creature to fight such enemies and keep them at bay². (6)

[Note—¹To wit, all the goodness and merit that comes to a creature by a religious way of life makes him so strong and robust that no worldly temptations would be able to make him do anything that is evil and unholy; no temptations or worldly charms would lead a spiritual person astray from his chosen path if he is well-established in his faith and follows the path of auspiciousness and righteousness, of truth and holiness. This is symbolized by saying that this "fort is impregnable and no enemy can break its walls".

²A great King has a number of knights and commanders who guard his vast and extended realm from attack by enemies. All have their importance and role to play in the protection of the kingdom. Likewise, all holy places that are spread over the land at different locations have their own value in helping the creature to ward off sins and their negative consequences.]

संगमु सिंहासनु सुठि सोहा । छत्रु अखयबटु मुनि मनु मोहा ॥ ७ ॥
चवँर जमुन अरु गंग तरंगा । देखि होहिं दुख दारिद भंगा ॥ ८ ॥

saṅgamu sinhāsanu suṭhi sōhā. chatru akhayabaṭu muni manu mōhā. 7.
cavamra jamuna aru gaṅga taraṅgā. dēkhi hōhim dukha dārida bhaṅgā. 8.

The confluence or the meeting place of three holy rivers (Ganges, Yamuna and Saraswati) is the symbolic 'throne' of this great King¹.

The famous banyan tree, known as the 'Akshaya Vata'² that is located here, with its huge bough and a large shade of leaves formed by its extended branches, is like the ceremonial umbrella, or the parasol, that is usually held over the throne where the king sits. (7)

The undulating currents of rivers Yamuna and Ganges are like the whisks that are swayed before the throne where the king sits. By merely glancing them (i.e. the holy rivers Yamuna and Ganges) all sorts of spiritual miseries and their associated troubles are eliminated. (8)

[Note—¹To wit, just as the throne of a great kingdom stands for the authority, dignity, honour, pride and majesty of the king, for it is the ‘seat’ of power where all authority and honour are concentrated, so is this place where these three rivers unite to grant it a very special aura of divinity and holiness.

²The word “Akshaya” means that which does not decay; and “Vata” means a tree. This banyan tree has been existence since ages, and to liken it to the ceremonial umbrella or the parasol placed above a king’s throne is to imply that the glory of this holy place called Tirtharaj or Prayag is eternal, and it does not fade away or reduce in importance with the passage of time.]

दो०. सेवहिं सुकृती साधु सुचि पावहिं सब मनकाम ।
बंदी बेद पुरान गन कहहिं बिमल गुन ग्राम ॥ १०५ ॥

dōhā.

sēvahiṃ sukr̥ti sādhu suci pāvahiṃ saba manakāma.
bandī bēda purāna gana kahahiṃ bimala guna grāma. 105.

When holy souls and saintly people serve this King, i.e. the holy pilgrim site known as Prayag or Tirtharaj, they are able to fulfill all their desires¹.

This is, forsooth and without gainsay, what the scriptures affirm, as well as is sung and praised by bards and minstrels. (Doha no. 105)

[Note—¹It ought to be noted here that we are talking about ‘holy souls and saintly people’. Hence, their desires would also be pious and holy, not worldly or material. So, by coming to this holy place and upholding the principles of Dharma that it embodies, pious people find joy and happiness, they find peace for their souls. Such people would not want worldly things or material benefits for undertaking a journey to any holy place, for their only wish would be liberation and deliverance from this world so that they can attain eternal peace and beatitude.

It ought to be carefully noted at this juncture that in order to get any worthwhile benefit by visiting any religious place one must have piety and purity of soul, a mind that is free from worldly attachments, a heart that has devotion for Lord God, and a general attitude marked by the virtues of holiness, truthfulness, faith, goodness, righteousness and auspiciousness.]

चौ०. को कहि सकइ प्रयाग प्रभाऊ । कलुष पुंज कुंजर मृगराऊ ॥ १ ॥
अस तीरथपति देखि सुहावा । सुख सागर रघुबर सुख पावा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kō kahi saka'i prayāga prabhā'ū. kaluṣa puñja kunjara mṛgarā'ū. 1.
asa tīrathapati dēkhi suhāvā. sukha sāgara raghubara sukhu pāvā. 2.

[Summing up the great glories and merits of Prayag, the poet Tulsidas says:]

Who can fully enumerate and praise the greatness and the glories of Prayag, for it is like a lion for the purpose of eliminating hordes of sins and their consequences represented by so many elephants in this world?¹ (1)

When Lord Ram, the exalted Lord of the family of king Raghu (raghubara), and who himself was an ocean of bliss and joy (sukha sāgara), saw such a pleasant place called Prayag, which was like the ‘king of holy places’ (i.e. tīrathapati), the Lord felt very glad and happy indeed. (2)

[Note—¹In this metaphor, Prayag is the ‘king of the jungle, the lion’, and the countless sins and their off-springs symbolized by the numerous consequences of sins, are like the many elephants that roam in the forest. A lion is able to fearlessly vanquish an elephant even though the elephant is much larger and stronger than the lion. Similarly, no matter how big the sin is, Prayag has the mystical ability to set things right.]

कहि सिय लखनहि सखहि सुनाई । श्रीमुख तीरथराज बड़ाई ॥ ३ ॥
करि प्रनामु देखत बन बागा । कहत महातम अति अनुरागा ॥ ४ ॥
एहि बिधि आइ बिलोकी बेनी । सुमिरत सकल सुमंगल देनी ॥ ५ ॥

kahi siya lakhanahi sakhahi sunā'ī. śrī mukha tīratharāja baṛā'ī. 3.
kari pranāmu dēkhata bana bāgā. kahata mahātama ati anurāgā. 4.
ēhi bidhi ā'ī bilōkī bēnī. sumirata sakala sumaṅgala dēnī. 5.

In the above mentioned way, Lord Ram himself praised the glories and greatness of Prayag, which was like a king of all pilgrim sites (tīratharāja), and graciously narrated them to Sita, Laxman and Guha Nishad, the Lord's friend. (3)

Thence, the Lord bowed his head before the holy place and moved ahead while looking around and appreciating the beauty of the surroundings which included the many gardens, groves and alcoves that came into view. The Lord continued to glorify the place and laud its greatness and beauty¹ with great devotion. (4)

In this way, walking along the road they eventually came and saw the place where the three holy rivers meet each other², a spot called Triveni. (5)

[Note—¹A similar narration is found when Lord Ram and Laxman had accompanied sage Vishwamitra to go to Janakpur, where the Lord would attend the ‘bow-breaking’ ceremony and marry Sita. The outskirts of Janakpur also had immense natural beauty and were very pleasant to behold. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 212 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede it.

Lord Ram had a keen sense of appreciating the beauty of Nature, and he would observe the smallest of things in the forest and point them out to Laxman. This comes to the fore in Ram Charit Manas, (a) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 37—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 41; (b) Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 13—to Doha no. 17.

²These three rivers are Ganges, Yamuna and Saraswati.]

मुदित नहाइ कीन्हि सिव सेवा । पूजि जथाबिधि तीरथ देवा ॥ ६ ॥
 तब प्रभु भरद्वाज पहिं आए । करत दंडवत मुनि उर लाए ॥ ७ ॥
 मुनि मन मोद न कछु कहि जाई । ब्रह्मानंद रासि जनु पाई ॥ ८ ॥

mudita nahā'i kīnhi siva sēvā. puji jathābidhi tīratha dēvā. 6.
 taba prabhu bharadvāja pahim ā'ē. karata daṇḍavata muni ura lā'ē. 7.
 muni mana mōda na kachu kahi jā'i. brahmānanda rāsi janu pā'i. 8.

After Lord Ram (and his companions) bathed in the holy rivers cheerfully, the Lord offered worship to Lord Shiva¹, and also duly offered his obeisance to the patron deity of the pilgrim site in the proper way it should be done². (6)

Thereafter, the Lord came to the hermitage of sage Bharadwaj³.

When Lord Ram prostrated himself before the great sage (to offer respects to him), Bharadwaj immediately lifted the Lord and embraced him most affectionately. (7)

The exhilaration and ecstasy that filled the sage's heart at that moment were so profound and deep that it is not possible to describe how he felt, except to say that the sage felt as if he has found a treasure-trove of supreme bliss that was equivalent to the beatitude obtained upon Brahm-realisation⁴. (8)

[Note—¹It ought to be marked here that whenever Lord Ram took a bath in a holy river, he would offer worship to Lord Shiva. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 103.

²We have already read that the patron deity of Prayag is Lord Madhav (also known as 'Bindu-Madhav')—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 105 herein above.

Besides Lord Bindu-Madhav and Lord Shiva, Lord Ram offered his obeisance to the goddesses representing these three holy rivers, i.e. Ganges, Yamuna and Saraswati.

³Sage Bharadwaj lived on the banks of the Triveni. Every year, a great congregation of saints and sages would assemble there on the auspicious occasion of Magha, the Hindu month when the sun passes into the asterism of Capricorn. It was on one such occasion that sage Yagyawalkya had narrated the divine story of Lord Ram to sage Bharadwaj. These things are narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 44—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 47.

This conversation took place in some ancient time, so by the time Lord Ram arrived at sage Bharadwaj's hermitage, the sage was well aware who the Lord was and how fortunate was he that the Lord had himself walked down to meet and bless him.

We must never be deluded and confused in these matters, wondering when Yagyawalkya told Bharadwaj about Lord Ram when the Lord was not even born, and was it possible for a human being to live so long as to transcend time and eras that

straddled different epochs. We must remember that we are reading about that era when life was long, and great sages had the ability to live long because they led a very disciplined and self-regulated life spent in meditation, which enabled them to prolong their physical existence much beyond normal time that an ordinary man would live. Another point to note is that Lord Ram was a personified form of the supreme Atma, the cosmic Consciousness that is also known by the name of the Supreme Being, and as such the Lord is eternal, infinite and imperishable, being in existence beyond this known world after the latter's term ended and everything collapsed into nothingness, till the time of the new beginning when a new phase started.

So, there is no falsehood or wonder in saying that both the things are true, viz. Yagyawalkya enlightening Bharadwaj about Lord Ram at a time when the Lord had no physical presence in the mortal world in the way we know about him through the story of the Ramayana, and the Lord himself visiting the same Bharadwaj many eras later on.

Or, come to think of it, it could be the other way round—i.e. sage Bharadwaj met Lord Ram earlier and was so confused about the true identity of the Lord that when sage Yagyawalkya visited him sometimes later on, Bharadwaj requested this great and learned sage to clarify the doubts of his mind regarding the truth of Lord Ram, upon which Yagyawalkya told him the story of the Lord with an emphasis on the Lord's divinity and holiness, and the fact that he was none but the Supreme Being in a human form.

A pen-sketch of sage Bharadwaj has been added as a detailed note earlier in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 44.

⁴The bliss and ecstasy obtained by Brahm-realisation is the supreme form of spiritual joy and beatitude that an ascetic enjoys when he rises above the plane of mundane existence, especially as a mark of success in his meditation and spiritual practices, so much so that his Atma, which is his true self and pure consciousness, transcends physical boundaries of the gross body in which it lives to rise and meet and become one with the cosmic Atma known as 'Parmatma', another term of a personified form of the cosmic Consciousness.

In our present context, Lord Ram represents the 'Parmatma', the Supreme Being, and when sage Bharadwaj, representing a living being, met the Lord, the sage's Atma met the Parmatma, an event for celebrations, an event that would bestow the sage with the same sort of bliss and beatitude that an ascetic obtains upon successful Brahm-realisation, which marks success of all his spiritual practices and penances and austerities that he had been pursuing steadfastly for a long time precisely with the aim of experiencing this supreme form of bliss, beatitude and felicity that can only be enjoyed by experience, but defy definition and narration by the use of words.]

दो०. दीन्हि असीस मुनीस उर अति अनंदु अस जानि ।

लोचन गोचर सुकृत फल मनहुँ किए बिधि आनि ॥ १०६ ॥

dōhā.

dīnhi asīsa munīsa ura ati anandu asa jāni.

lōcana gōcara sukr̥ta phala manahum̐ ki'ē bidhi āni. 106.

The exalted sage Bharadwaj blessed Lord Ram even as he felt extremely honoured and exhilarated with the thought that he is so fortunate that the Creator has favoured him with an opportunity to get the reward of all his spiritual practices, austerities and penances right before his eyes in physical and practical terms by way of being able to welcome and see Lord Ram personally¹. (Doha no. 106)

[Note—¹Bharadwaj had never forgotten the importance of this moment in his life when he met Lord Ram and felt that he has been fully rewarded by the Creator for all his spiritual practices, austerities and penances. This feeling of joy and ecstasy of Bharadwaj is clear later on in the story when he tells Bharat precisely this same thing—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 210.]

चौ०. कुसल प्रस्न करि आसन दीन्हे । पूजि प्रेम परिपूरन कीन्हे ॥ १ ॥
कंद मूल फल अंकुर नीके । दिए आनि मुनि मनहुँ अमी के ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

kusala prasna kari āsana dīnhē. pūji prēma paripūrana kīnhē. 1.
kanda mūla phala aṅkura nīkē. di'ē āni muni manahum' amī kē. 2.

Sage Bharadwaj welcomed Lord Ram, asked about his welfare, and offered him a seat to sit down. Then the sage most affectionately offered his worship to the Lord and made him feel fully contented¹. (1)

Then, the sage offered edible roots, stems, fruits and freshly sprouted grains by way of refreshment to the Lord and his companions (Sita, Laxman and Guha). These offerings were very succulent and sweet as if they were dipped in nectar². (2)

[Note—¹Lord Ram was always given a warm welcome and offered an affectionate form of worship at the hermitage of all great sages he visited. For instance, Valmiki offered obeisance to Lord Ram and affectionately brought the Lord to his hermitage when he went to meet the sage—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 124 and Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that follow it.

Later on, a similar welcome marked by warmth and affection was extended to the Lord by sage Atri, and later on by sage Agastya—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, (i) Doha no. 3 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede it (Atri); and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 9-12 that precede Doha no. 12 (Agastya).

²This was the second time that Lord Ram had something proper to eat after leaving Ayodhya—the first occasion was when Guha Nishad had brought similar victuals for the Lord when he arrived at Sringeripur. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 89 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it.

Such eatables as were offered by sage Bharadwaj were the only kind of things that Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman would be eating throughout their sojourn in the forest, because these were the only things that were available in the forests. We read later on about them feeding on similar items in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 124 prior to the Lord arriving at sage Valmiki's hermitage.

Like Bharadwaj, sage Valmiki and sage Atri had also offered similar refreshment to Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 125 (Valmiki); and (b) Aranya Kand, Doha no. 3 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede it (Atri).

When Lord Ram reached Chitrakoot for abiding there for some time before moving ahead into the deeper parts of the forest, the tribal folks who lived in the forests and hills of that area had warmly welcomed the Lord and brought fruits, roots and stems as offering of refreshment for the Lord—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 135.

Another instance of such warm welcome and offering of refreshment in the form of sweet edible roots, stems, fruits to Lord Ram and his companions is when they reached the hermitage of Sabari, the aged tribal woman whom the Lord blessed with his visit, thereby granting her liberation and providing her soul with deliverance from this mortal world—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 34 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it.]

सीय लखन जन सहित सुहाए । अति रुचि राम मूल फल खाए ॥ ३ ॥
भए बिगतश्रम राम सुखारे । भरद्वाज मृदु बचन उचारे ॥ ४ ॥

sīya lakhana jana sahita suhā'ē. ati ruci rāma mūla phala khā'ē. 3.
bha'ē bigataśrama rāmu sukhārē. bharadvāja mṛdu bacana ucārē. 4.

Lord Ram, along with Sita, Laxman and his companion Guha Nishad ate with relish the tasty roots, stems and fruits that were offered to them by sage Bharadwaj. (3)

When Lord Ram felt refreshed and relaxed after having something to eat and resting for a while, sage Bharadwaj spoke sweetly to him. (4)

आजु सुफल तपु तीरथ त्यागू । आजु सुफल जप जोग बिरागू ॥ ५ ॥
सफल सकल सुभ साधन साजू । राम तुम्हहि अवलोकत आजू ॥ ६ ॥

āju suphala tapu tīratha tyāgū. āju suphala japa jōga birāgū. 5.
saphala sakala subha sādhanā sājū. rāma tumhahi avalōkata ājū. 6.

The elated sage was jubilant at the opportunity to meet Lord Ram. He expressed his joy when he told the Lord: 'Oh Lord! Today all my spiritual endeavours and religious practices such as my doing of Tapa (austerity and penance), going on pilgrimage to holy places, observing strict self-restraint and practicing the virtues of renunciation, doing Japa (repetition of spiritual Mantras or formulas as a part of daily religious routine), Yoga (meditation) and Vairagya (detachment and dispassion towards the material world and its charms, self-control of sense organs and their natural tendency to be attracted towards their objects in this world)—verily indeed, all such efforts of mine have been successful today. (5)

Oh Lord Ram! In all sooth I say that by seeing thine holy Self today, all my pious efforts and spiritual practices have ripened and borne fruits; I have been amply

rewarded for all my religious endeavours and pious exercises by having the golden opportunity to meet and see thee from up close, with the honour of having a communion with thine divine Self in a one-on-one interaction¹. (6)

[Note—¹Sage Bharadwaj has told Bharat later on that when he had met Lord Ram earlier during the Lord's visit to his hermitage on his way to the forest, the sage had felt that all his spiritual practices, all his religious exercise, and all his pious efforts done in life had been successful—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 210.

Sage Vasistha too reiterates the same idea that the best reward for all spiritual and religious efforts and meritorious deeds is to serve Lord Ram, have devotion for the Lord, and worship him with faith and affection. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 48—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 49.

Sages Valmiki, Atri, Sutikshan and Agastya—all had felt jubilant and blessed when they had the opportunity to meet Lord Ram. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 125 (Valmiki); (b) Aranya Kand, (ii) Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 3 (Atri); (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-12 that precede Doha no. 10 (Sutikshan); (iv) Chaupai line nos. 9-11 that precede Doha no. 12 (Agastya).}]

लाभ अवधि सुख अवधि न दूजी । तुम्हरेँ दरस आस सब पूजी ॥ ७ ॥

अब करि कृपा देहु बर एहू । निज पद सरसिज सहज सनेहू ॥ ८ ॥

lābha avadhi sukha avadhi na dūjī. tumharēṁ darasa āsa saba pūjī. 7.
aba kari kṛpā dēhu bara ēhū. nija pada sarasija sahaja sanēhū. 8.

By having the opportunity to see thee, all the best of rewards and happiness are mine, for there is nothing more auspicious and a provider of joy than this rare privilege of meeting thee. Indeed, all my hopes and prayers have been answered fully today, and I have been so contented that there is nothing more that I would want. (7)

Now Lord, please be kind to bless me and grant me the boon that I mayest have undiluted affection and devotion for thine holy feet¹. (8)

[Note—¹Sage Vasistha too says the same thing to Lord Ram in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 48—to Doha no. 49.

Refer also to: Veda Vyas' "Adhyatma Ramayan", Ayodhya Kand, Canto 6, verse nos. 36, 39.]

दो०. करम बचन मन छाड़ि छलु जब लगि जनु न तुम्हार ।

तब लगि सुखु सपनेहुँ नहीं किऐँ कोटि उपचार ॥ १०७ ॥

dōhā.

karama bacana mana chāṛi chalu jaba lagi janu na tumhāra.
taba lagi sukhu sapanēhum' nahīm ki'ēm' kōṭi upacāra. 107.

Sage Bharadwaj summoned up his spiritual philosophy with respect to having devotion for the Supreme Being by telling Lord Ram: ‘As long as a creature does not abandon all sorts of pretensions, conceit and deceit, and does not submit himself before you to serve you and have devotion for you in his deeds, his words and his thoughts—till then the creature cannot dream of ever having peace and happiness in his life no matter what devices he employs to attain them¹.’ (Doha no. 107)

[Note—¹Lord Ram has reiterated the same idea when he was advising the citizens of Ayodhya on the way of having happiness and peace in life—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 43.

The Lord says that if a person does not follow the path of Bhakti and lead an auspicious way of life marked by righteousness in deed, word and thought, if he indulges in the gross world and its material sense objects, if he falls prey to temptations and yields to the desire for self-gratification, then he would have to regret and beat his head in repentance while uselessly blaming providence, fate and the creator for his misfortunes. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 43—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 45.

Meanwhile, when Lord Ram would meet the great sage Valmiki after leaving the hermitage of sage Bharadwaj and asked the sage to advice him where he should abide, Valmiki would outline a long list of virtues that symbolically represent the holy and purified places where Lord Ram, the Supreme Being, should live. In the course of enumerating these virtues, Valmiki points out certain qualities that resonate perfectly with what Bharadwaj says here—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 5 and 8 that precede Doha no. 130; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 6 and 8 that precede Doha no. 131.

Further, Valmiki points out some of the other qualities that would entitle a person to obtain eternal peace, bliss and beatitude, and examined closely they all focus on the same virtue—of having undiluted and true devotion for Lord Ram that would involve a person’s entire being, including his actions, his thoughts and his words. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha nos. 128, 129, 130 and 131.]

चौ०. सुनि मुनि बचन रामु सकुचाने । भाव भगति आनंद अघाने ॥ १ ॥

तब रघुबर मुनि सुजसु सुहावा । कोटि भाँति कहि सबहि सुनावा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sunī muni bacana rāmu sakucānē. bhāva bhagati ānanda aghānē. 1.

taba raghubara muni sujasu suhāvā. kōṭi bhāmṭi kahi sabahi sunāvā. 2.

When Lord Ram heard what sage Bharadwaj said in his praise, he felt abashed and became shy, though the Lord internally was very happy by observing the greatness of the virtues of devotion and affection for him that the exalted sage possessed, as well as the joy and exhilaration that the sage felt by meeting the Lord. (1)

As a reciprocal gesture, Lord Ram now praised sage Bharadwaj lavishly by telling everyone present there¹ about the greatness, virtuous qualities and countless glories of the sage. (2)

[Note—¹Who were present there? The answer is obvious—first, they were Lord Ram's companions, Sita, Laxman and Guha Nishad, and second, other sages and disciples of sage Bharadwaj who lived in his hermitage.

When the residents of the hermitage saw Lord Ram arrive and sage Bharadwaj himself warmly welcoming the Lord and worshipping him, offering the Lord refreshments and showing great devotion and affection for his guest, everyone around the place was sure that these guests, i.e. Lord Ram and his companions, were someone special and most honourable, for otherwise a sage of the stature of Bharadwaj would not have gone out of his way to show so much affection and respect to Lord Ram. Hence, everyone gathered around Lord Ram and sage Bharadwaj to enjoy the joy of that moment, and to participate and be a witness to this momentous occasion.]

सो बड़ सो सब गुन गन गेहू । जेहि मुनीस तुम्ह आदर देहू ॥ ३ ॥

मुनि रघुबीर परसपर नवहीं । बचन अगोचर सुखु अनुभवहीं ॥ ४ ॥

sō baḍa sō saba guna gana gēhū. jēhi munīsa tumha ādara dēhū. 3.

muni raghubīra parasapara navahīm. bacana agōcara sukhu anubhavahīm. 4.

Expressing his gratitude towards sage Bharadwaj, Lord Ram told him: 'Oh sage, a person on whom you show such grace and whom you so much praise (as you have done to me) is indeed very exalted, very lucky, privileged and honourable, and surely he is an abode of all virtues¹. (3)

In this way, both sage Bharadwaj and Lord Ram showed honour and courteousness to each other by one praising the other in lavish terms.

The mutual sense of joy and happiness they felt by this meeting, and the respect and affection they showed for each other, were of a sublime nature, something that cannot be seen by physical eyes but can be felt and experienced at the subtle level (i.e. at the spiritual plane)². (4)

[Note—¹In an indirect way, Lord Ram endorses sage Bharadwaj's praise for the Lord, and acknowledges that what the exalted sage has said about the Lord is true. This is one view. The other view is that Lord Ram was reciprocating the honour, the courteousness and the politeness shown to him by sage Bharadwaj, as is clear in verse no. 4.

²Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 108 where a similar idea is expressed.

Lord Ram felt very glad and happy that he has been able to meet a great sage of Bharadwaj's stature, and that he has rewarded the sage with immense spiritual bliss and beatitude as a part of the divine mandate of the Supreme Being that he would bless great sages and pious souls by visiting them during his manifestation in this world as Lord Ram—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 13; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 122; and (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 152; (b) Aranya Kand, (iv) Doha no. 9.

On the other hand, sage Bhardwaj felt exhilarated that he was so lucky and privileged that the Supreme Being himself came visiting him to oblige him and

reward him for a lifetime of spiritual practices and religious observations—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 107; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 210.]

यह सुधि पाइ प्रयाग निवासी । बटु तापस मुनि सिद्ध उदासी ॥ ५ ॥
भरद्वाज आश्रम सब आए । देखन दसरथ सुअन सुहाए ॥ ६ ॥

yaha sudhi pā'i prayāga nivāsī. baṭu tāpasa muni sid'dha udāsī. 5.
bharadvāja āśrama saba ā'ē. dēkhana dasaratha su'ana suhā'ē. 6.

No sooner this news (of Lord Ram's arrival at sage Bharadwaj's hermitage) spread, than all the Brahmins, ascetics, sages, mystics and other pious souls who practiced renunciation and detachment from the world and lived in Prayag in pursuance of their religious practices and spiritual objectives --- (5)

--- All of them collected in large numbers at the hermitage of sage Bharadwaj to have see the son of king Dasrath (i.e. Lord Ram) who was very charming to behold¹. (6)

[Note—¹It is remarkable to note here that instead of saying “Lord Ram”, it is mentioned that these people collected to see “the son of king Dasrath” (dēkhana dasaratha su'ana) who was very charming and attractive to behold.

It implies that few amongst them knew the truth of who Lord Ram actually was, i.e. that he was a human manifestation of the Supreme Being. The news of king Dasrath sending his son, Lord Ram, to the forest due to some family intrigue in the royal palace, had spread like wildfire in the land. Lord Ram, Laxman and Sita had charming and most pleasant personalities so much so they stood out in a crowd. Besides this, the word spread that Bharadwaj has shown them special honour, which means there was something unique with the guests, for otherwise the exalted sage was not in the habit of going out of his way to show so extensive affection and great honour to anybody. Hence, everyone was sure that they must not miss this opportunity to go and see Lord Ram.

The Lord's charisma, charm and glories were of such stupendous proportions that not only these people who lived in and around Prayag, but even ordinary people of the far-flung parts of the countryside, of remote villages and hamlets, would rush to see Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman as soon as they got the news that they are in the vicinity and passing their way. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 114—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 115; (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 115—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 116; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 120.

If someone missed to see them or was late in coming while Lord Ram moved ahead on his path to the forest, all such people would regret and lament at having missed this golden chance of a lifetime. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 121—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 122.

Nevertheless, it didn't matter with what purpose they came to see Lord Ram, for either way all were blessed by having the chance to pay their obeisance to the Lord and have his divine view. It is like the case of someone drinking some sweet liquid without being aware of what it actually is. It may be an ordinary sweetened

drink, or luckily for the person it may be pure nectar. The difference would be known to the drinker only after he has drunk the unknown liquid—for the exhilaration and ecstasy that pure nectar would provide him would be matchless and an unforgettable experience as compared to some ordinary drink. To wit, everyone who saw Lord Ram felt a thrill passing through their entire being; it was an experience of a lifetime so exciting and so exuberant that it could not be described in words—like sage Bharadwaj had felt himself. Refer: Chaupai line no. 4 herein above, that precedes these verses.]

राम प्रनाम कीन्ह सब काहू । मुदित भए लहि लोयन लाहू ॥ ७ ॥
देहिं असीस परम सुखु पाई । फिरे सराहत सुंदरताई ॥ ८ ॥

rāma pranāma kīnha saba kāhū. mudita bha'e lahi lōyana lāhū. 7.
dēhim asīsa parama sukhu pā'ī. phirē sarāhata sundaratā'ī. 8.

Lord Ram paid his obeisance by respectfully bowing before all those who had come to visit him.

On the other hand, all those who saw the divine form of Lord Ram felt exhilarated because they were being rewarded for possessing the faculty of sight that enabled them to see the Lord and derive immense joy by this sight. (7)

All of them (the Brahmins, sages, ascetics and other pious souls) blessed Lord Ram even as they derived immense happiness and joy by meeting the Lord. Then they returned, all the while praising the beauty and charm of the Lord on their way back¹. (8)

[Note—¹A little later on in our reading we shall read that when villagers and strangers met Lord Ram as he wended his way along the path to the forest, everyone was ecstatic, but when the time came for the Lord to leave them behind and move on, all felt very sad but thanked their luck and their faculty of sight which enabled them to see the Lord. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 118 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede it; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 120; (iii) Doha nos. 122 and 123.

We also read that all the great sages whom Lord Ram met had felt that they have been fully rewarded for possessing eyes that enabled them to have a divine view of Lord Ram. Refer for instance, Ram Charit Manas, (a) Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 125 (sage Valmiki); (b) Aranya Kand, (ii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 3 (sage Atri); (iii) Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 10 (sage Sutikshan); (iv) Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 12 (sage Agastya).

By-and-by we read that whenever Lord Ram rested at some place, the gods would come to pay their obeisance to him and then returned to heaven. One such instance is when the Lord reached a lake called 'Pampa' and rested there for a while before moving ahead. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 39; followed by (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 41.]

दो०. राम कीन्ह बिश्राम निसि प्रात प्रयाग नहाइ ।
चले सहित सिय लखन जन मुदित मुनिहि सिरु नाइ ॥ १०८ ॥

dōhā.

rāma kīnha biśrāma nisi prāta prayāga nahā'i.
calē sahita siya lakhana jana mudita munihi siru nā'i. 108.

That night Lord Ram took rest (i.e. slept, at the hermitage of Bharadwaj). The next morning he took a bath at the confluence of the three holy rivers for which Prayag is so famed and revered.

Thence, after bowing his head before the sage (Bharadwaj), Lord Ram cheerfully departed from the place, along with Sita, Laxman and his friend (Guha Nishad—"jana"), for his onward journey. (Doha no. 108)

चौ०. राम सप्रेम कहेउ मुनि पाहीं । नाथ कहिअ हम केहि मग जाहीं ॥ १ ॥
मुनि मन बिहसि राम सन कहहीं । सुगम सकल मग तुम्ह कहूँ अहहीं ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

rāma saprēma kahē'u muni pāhīm. nātha kahi'a hama kēhi maga jāhīm. 1.
muni mana bihasi rāma sana kahahīm. sugama sakala maga tumha
kahum'ahahīm. 2.

At the time of his departure, Lord Ram asked sage Bharadwaj: 'Oh Lord, please tell me which path we ought to take to the forest.' (1)

Hearing Lord Ram ask him this question, the sage was very amused and he smiled internally as he replied: 'Lord, all the paths are accessible for you, and all would lead you to your destination. To wit, whichever path you would choose to follow, would be best and most suitable for you.

[Sage Bharadwaj told Lord Ram: "Oh Lord, who am I to tell thy exalted Self which way to go, for it is thee who knows best, and it is thee who is expected to show the creature the path of life that wouldst be best suited for him. But of course, it is thine greatness and humility that thou have chosen to ask me to show thee the path, for truly it is because thou art playing thine role as a human being to perfection. Well, thank thee for thy graciousness and giving me the honour of being able to tell thee which way to proceed."]¹ (2)

[Note—¹Lord Ram will ask sage Valmiki a similar question—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 126. Sage Valmiki told him to go and stay at Chitrakoot—apropos: Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 132.

Later on we shall read that Lord Ram asked sage Agastya which way to go, and the sage asked Lord Ram to go and stay at Panchabati in the Dandakaranya forest—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 14-17 that precede Doha no. 13.]

साथ लागि मुनि सिष्य बोलाए । सुनि मन मुदित पचासक आए ॥ ३ ॥
सबन्दि राम पर प्रेम अपारा । सकल कहहिं मगु दीख हमारा ॥ ४ ॥

sātha lāgi muni siṣya bōlā'ē. suni mana mudita pacāsaka ā'ē. 3.
sabanhi rāma para prēma apārā. sakala kahahi magu dīkha hamārā. 4.

[In order to help Lord Ram take a path to the forest that would be suitable for him to fulfill his mission in life, which was to eliminate the demons and bless the great sages, ascetics and mystics living in remote areas of the land pursuing their spiritual objectives and doing religious practices, sage Bharadwaj chose to send some of his wise disciples with the Lord to show him the right way out of the city of Prayag from the many roads that led in different directions from the place.]

Sage Bharadwaj called some of his disciples to accompany Lord Ram (to guide him and show him the path that the Lord should take out of Prayag). Hearing his call, some fifty or so disciples came forward very gladly (and volunteered to accompany the Lord and show him the road out of Prayag). (3)

All of them had boundless affection for Lord Ram, and every one of them said that they have seen the road that leads out of Prayag in the correct direction towards the forest beyond (and so they would be able to show Lord Ram the right direction in which he ought to proceed)¹. (4)

[Note—¹As soon as it was known that sage Bharadwaj wanted some of his disciples to come forward and go with Lord Ram to show him the path out of the city of Prayag in the direction towards the forest beyond, as many as fifty or so disciples volunteered their services. All of them wished to get an opportunity of a lifetime, and they vied with each other to become the guide, each saying that he knew the road better than his friend.

Lord Ram had such a stupendous magical charm and a profound magnetic appeal in him that wherever the Lord went, everyone would be drawn towards him automatically like iron is to a powerful magnet. The people would not like to leave him; if they had their will they would wish to accompany him all their lives. So, when the time came to part, all felt very sad and heavy in their hearts.

We read about such examples at three places in Ram Charit Manas. Let us see when:

The first occasion was when Lord Ram and Laxman had gone for a sight-seeing visit in the city of Janakpur. No sooner the news spread that the two brothers are visiting the city, its inhabitants, men and children of all ages, poured out onto the streets, crowding around the brothers and following them in large numbers wherever they went. The children outsmarted their elders as they shoved and jostled through the milling crowd to get close to Lord Ram, holding the Lord's hands excitedly and enthusiastically pulling him in this and that direction to show him through the city and point out its various landmarks. Some wanted the Lord to step inside their homes; others would want him to wait for a while so that some refreshments could be offered to the brothers. The crowd of exhilarated citizens was so thick and excited that the Lord had almost to crawl slowly through his walk around the city, and he took longer than expected in his outing. When finally the time came to say good-bye to each other, everyone felt sad and heavy in heart as if they had to be forced into separation from

someone they loved so much. This episode is narrated very vividly in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 220—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 225.

The second occasion would come when Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman walked on the road to the forest, passing by villages and hamlets that fell on either side of the way. Huge numbers of country-folk would rush to meet them, talk with them, offer refreshments to them, walk with them for some distance, and finally when the time came for them to return home all felt sad and heavy in heart. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 109; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 110; (iii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 114—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 119; (iv) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 121—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 122.

And, the third instance is in the deeper parts of the forest. When sages and hermits etc. living there heard of Lord Ram's arrival and passage through the forest, all of them rushed to meet the Lord and accompany him, talk with him, and follow him as far as they could go. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 9.]

मुनि बटु चारि संग तब दीन्हे । जिन्ह बहु जनम सुकृत सब कीन्हे ॥ ५ ॥
करि प्रनामु रिषि आयसु पाई । प्रमुदित हृदयँ चले रघुराई ॥ ६ ॥

muni baṭu cāri saṅga taba dīnhē. jinha bahu janama sukr̥ta saba kīnhē. 5.
kari pranāmu riṣi āyasu pāī. pramudita hr̥dayam̐ calē raghurāī. 6.

[The sage was very amused by their enthusiasm, but since it was not practical to send all of them, he selected about four of his disciples for the job, those who had spent their life in doing meritorious deeds, and had led a disciplined and auspicious way of life.]

However, the sage (Bharadwaj) selected about four of the disciples whom he wanted to feel rewarded for a lifetime¹ spent in doing meritorious deeds, and leading a well-disciplined and auspicious way of life. (5)

Thence, Lord Ram bowed his head before the great sage (Bharadwaj), took his leave, and cheerfully departed from there for his onwards journey. (6)

[Note—¹The actual phrase used in the verse is “bahu janama”, meaning many lives. But from a practical point of view it implies a very long time, a lifetime. Usually young boys came to hermitages of great sages to study under them, and after their education was complete, they would go back home to pursue their own lives. Some would, however, stay back at the hermitage, deciding to spend the rest of their lives like a hermit themselves. These were the ones whom sage Bharadwaj wanted to reward, and such disciples were few, say about four or five in all, whom he sent with Lord Ram.]

ग्राम निकट जब निकसहिं जाई । देखहिं दरसु नारि नर धाई ॥ ७ ॥

होहिं सनाथ जनम फलु पाई । फिरहिं दुखित मनु संग पठाई ॥ ८ ॥

grāma nikaṭa jaba nikasahi jā'ī. dēkhahi darasu nāri nara dhā'ī. 7.
hōhi sanātha janama phalu pā'ī. phirahi dukhita manu saṅga paṭhā'ī. 8.

When Lord Ram (and his companions, Sita, Laxman, Guha Nishad, and the disciples sent by Bharadwaj as guides) passed by near a village, the villagers, men and women, rushed out to meet the Lord and see his divine Self. (7)

All of them felt exceedingly happy and privileged to have been able to meet and see Lord Ram, and were glad that they have got a reward of a lifetime, that their birth in this world has been fully rewarded on this occasion.

However, when the time came to return back, all felt very sad and heavy in their hearts so much so that though they were compelled to part with the Lord in physical sense, yet they sent their heart with the Lord at a subtle plane¹. (8)

[Note—¹To wit, the common country-folk were so mesmerized by Lord Ram's charm and divine appeal that for a while they would stare at him dazed, feeling exceedingly happy and blissful, would talk amongst themselves about the Lord, and when the time came to return to their homes, though they turned back with a sad and doleful heart at the physical level, yet at a subtle plane they sent their heart with the Lord.

It means that from that time onwards, their thoughts and feelings were with Lord Ram; they would remember the Lord at all times of their lives and become pensive; they would go about their life's routine in a mechanical way, as a person lost in day-dreaming, because their thoughts were far away with Lord Ram.

One important point to be noted here is that these villagers lived on this side of river Yamuna which Lord Ram reached by eventide. After the Lord and his companions crossed the river to the other side, as narrated in Doha no. 109 herein below, a similar narrative is described wherein villagers dwelling on that side of the river would also collect in large numbers as soon as the news of the Lord's arrival spread there—refer: Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that follow Doha no. 109 below.]

दो०. बिदा किए बटु बिनय करि फिरे पाइ मन काम ।
उतरि नहाए जमुन जल जो सरीर सम स्याम ॥ १०९ ॥

dōhā.

bidā ki'ē baṭu binaya kari phirē pā'i mana kāma.
utari nahā'ē jamuna jala jō sarīra sama syāma. 109.

When Lord Ram reached the banks of river Yamuna, he bid good-bye to the disciples whom sage Bharadwaj had sent with the Lord to show him the path to be followed.

The disciple-guides returned back with a feeling of being blessed and having all their desires fulfilled¹.

Thence, Lord Ram took a bath in the waters of river Yamuna² which were as dark as the Lord's own complexion. (Doha no. 109)

[Note—¹To wit, these disciple-guides had accompanied Lord Ram and his companions till the banks of river Yamuna on the other side of Prayag, on the path

leading to the hermitage of another great sage named Valmiki. Then, the Lord politely thanked them and asked them to return to their hermitage.

²Now, let us pause and contemplate upon how Lord Ram and his companions crossed this river, and when did he take his bath?

According to Veda Vyas' "Adhyatma Ramayan", Ayodhya Kand, Canto 6, verse nos. 42-43, the disciples sent by sage Bharadwaj had fixed together a small canoe-kind of float that could be rowed and take Lord Ram and his companions to the other side of the river. The next morning, the Lord requested the sage's disciples to return to their hermitage, crossed the river on this float, and then after getting down on the other side of the river, he took his bath in the waters of Yamuna before proceeding ahead.

But since no explicit mention about how Lord Ram and his companions had crossed river Yamuna is made by Tulsidas here in Ram Charit Manas, we can safely assume that they used a boat to do so. In ancient times, it was normal to find boats at points on the road leading to rivers where travellers would cross the river to the other side on these boats to resume their onwards journey. By the time Lord Ram had arrived here, the news of how a great prince had been exiled to the forest due to some nasty intrigue in the household of his father had already reached far-flung parts of the land. Besides this, Guha Nishad, who was the chief of the community of boatmen, was with the Lord, and this news also spread quickly by word-of-mouth amongst all the communities of boatmen who lived along the banks of rivers in that geographical area of the land. So, when Lord Ram and others stood on the bank of river Yamuna on this side, contemplating upon means to go across to the other side, they would have found quite a few boatmen ready to row them across the river.

This is the probable reason why the learned poet Tulsidas kept quiet on the issue of how Lord Ram and his companions crossed river Yamuna as he thought it to be unnecessary and superficial to specifically mention it, because it is common sense how he would have done it.

When a person is on a long journey, he would rest for the night, and then take a bath the next morning before resuming his journey for the day. This will make it obvious that Lord Ram had taken his bath when he reached the other side of river Yamuna, and not on this side, before proceeding ahead to the hermitage of sage Valmiki on his way to Chitrakoot where he would abide for sometime. The direction to Valmiki's hermitage was given by the disciples of sage Bharadwaj before they took leave of Lord Ram and went back to Prayag to report to their guru.

We shall read a little later that Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman would bow before the holy river and pay their obeisance to its deity before departing from the river's bank on their onwards journey in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 112.]

चौ०. सुनत तीरबासी नर नारी । धाए निज निज काज बिसारी ॥ १ ॥

लखन राम सिय सुंदरताई । देखि करहिं निज भाग्य बड़ाई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sunata tīravāsī nara nārī. dhā'ē nija nija kāja bisārī. 1.

lakhana rāma siya sundaratā'ī. dēkhi karahim nija bhāgya barā'ī. 2.

No sooner the residents of the areas around the banks of river Yamuna on the other side heard of the arrival of Lord Ram, both the men and the women folks left behind whatever work they were engaged in at that moment to rush out instantly to meet the Lord. (1)

When they beheld the bewitching beauty of Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman, they were left spell-bound by the divine sight even as they thanked their good fortune and praised their fate which had entitled them to have this glorious opportunity of a lifetime¹. (2)

[Note—¹When Lord Ram had arrived at Sringeripur on the banks of river Ganges earlier, a similar kind of euphoria had spread amongst the villagers living alongside the banks of that river—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 89.

Once again, when the residents of Prayag learnt of the Lord's arrival at the hermitage of sage Bharadwaj, all came to see the Lord and pay their obeisance to him, feeling exceptionally glad, privileged and blissful at this opportunity—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 108.

We have already read how the villagers living on the side of river Yamuna facing Prayag had come rushing out to meet Lord Ram, felt exhilarated after seeing the divine form of the Lord, and then returned home with a heavy and sad heart even as they remembered the Lord and mentally followed him out of their village—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 109 herein above.

Refer also to (a) Geetawali Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, where the divine and beautiful sight of Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman as they walked down the path to the forest has been vividly, elaborately, and most beautifully described in verse nos. 15—32, 40; (b) Kavitaawali Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, 14-25.]

अति लालसा बसहिं मन माहीं । नाउँ गाउँ बूझत सकुचाहीं ॥ ३ ॥

जे तिन्ह महुँ बयबिरिध सयाने । तिन्ह करि जुगुति रामु पहिचाने ॥ ४ ॥

ati lālasā basahim mana māhīm. nā'um' gā'um' būjhata sakucāhīm. 3.

jē tinha mahum' bayabiridha sayānē. tinha kari juguti rāmu pahicānē. 4.

Everyone had a desire to learn more about these divine visitors; they wanted to know from whence they have come, what was the name of their native place (or village), and what their names were¹, but they were so awed by Lord Ram's divine presence that they hesitated to ask him anything directly on this matter. (3)

However, those amongst them who were old in age, clever and wise, devised some means by which they could recognize who Lord Ram was². (4)

[Note—¹Refer to Geetawali Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, verse nos. 35 (especially its stanza no. 3), and 37.

²Refer to Geetawali Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, verse no. 39.

How did these wise men come to know who Lord Ram was? Well, though nothing is explicitly said here, yet one can apply common sense to derive at a possible answer. First, we know that Guha Nishad was with Lord Ram, and he was a villager himself, being a member of boatman tribe. Further, from his physical appearance he looked different from Lord Ram and Laxman. So therefore, these wise villagers drew near him and quietly asked him who the three noble travellers were, at which Nishad told them who Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman were.

Second, someone in the crowd had heard that a great king named Dasrath of Ayodhya had sent his son to the forest, and the wife and the younger brother of this son too joined him at the time of departure. Therefore, when this wise man observed the royal demeanours and noble bearings of Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman, he could immediately put two and two together to arrive at an answer about who they were.

A little later on in our narrative we shall read that the women folk surrounded Sita and asked her about the two gentlemen accompanying her. Sita then gave them a hint who Lord Ram and Laxman were—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 116—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 117.]

सकल कथा तिन्ह सबहि सुनाई । बनहि चले पितु आयसु पाई ॥ ५ ॥
सुनि सबिषाद सकल पछिताहीं । रानी रायँ कीन्ह भल नाही ॥ ६ ॥

sakala kathā tinha sabahi sunāī. banahi calē pitu āyasu pāī. 5.
suni sabiṣāda sakala pachitāhīm. rānī rāyam' kīnha bhala nāhīm. 6.

Once these wise men became acquainted about who Lord Ram was, they told everyone about it, that the Lord (Ram) had departed for the forest on the instructions of his father (Dasrath). (5)

This news filled everyone's heart with sadness and dismay even as they lamented that the king and the queen (Dasrath and Kaikeyi) have not done the right thing at all¹. (6)

[Note—¹Refer also to: (a) Geetawali Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, verse nos. 26-27; 39-40; (b) Kavitawali Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, verse nos. 18, 20; (c) Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 89, and Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 122.]

तेहि अवसर एक तापसु आवा । तेजपुंज लघुबयस सुहावा ॥ ७ ॥
कबि अलखित गति बेषु बिरागी । मन क्रम बचन राम अनुरागी ॥ ८ ॥

tēhi avasara ēka tāpasu āvā. tējapunja laghubayasa suhāvā. 7.
kavi alakhita gati bēṣu birāgī. mana krama bacana rāma anurāgī. 8.

At that time, an ascetic came there. He was glowing with a spiritual energy about him, was young in age, and had a very pleasing personality. (7)

He had such a mystical aura about him though that even a wise poet is unable to know who he was or understand enough about his true identity as to say who he was, except to affirm that he was attired as a great hermit who had renounced all attachments with this gross material world and its charms, and that he was highly devoted to Lord Ram in his deeds, words and thoughts, and had great affection for the Lord's holy feet¹. (8)

[Note—¹Who this ascetic was is not at all certain; even the learned author of Ram Charit Manas, i.e. Goswami Tulsidas, has himself said “---even a wise poet is unable to know and understand his true identity and say who he was---” (kavi alakhita gati).

Many scholars have made as many conjectures about his identity, but no conclusive and intelligent argument is provided by anyone of them that could throw light on who this ascetic might have been. Nevertheless, this humble author (who is penning the English rendering of Ram Charit Manas which the reader is going through at present) thinks that one can arrive at a possible answer by an intelligent application of mind and wisdom that would stand scrutiny.

So, there are three probabilities as to who this gentleman was. Let us examine them as follows:

(a) He could have been some great ascetic who preferred to live anonymously in the forest, spending his time in solitude and peace while pursuing his spiritual objectives, without wishing to be disturbed by visitors and seekers of blessings. He was unlike other great sages of that time who were well-known and had established hermitages where students and disciples would flock. Nevertheless, this ascetic was no less spiritually elevated, self-realised, a knower of Brahm and highly enlightened than any of his peers, the only difference was that he remained unknown and anonymous. When he heard that the Supreme Being in the form of Lord Ram was coming that way, with one of the purposes of the Lord's visit being blessing and granting deliverance, emancipation, salvation, and eternal bliss and beatitude to sages, hermits, ascetics, mystics etc. living in the forest, he rushed to meet the Lord, fulfill his spiritual desires, and feel blessed and fully rewarded for all the penances and austerities he had been doing for a long time.

(b) Another possibility is that some great sage had reached a higher stage of Yoga (meditation) when it was possible for his soul, i.e. his Atma, to leave the gross physical body and roam in the form of a Spirit. In ancient days we often time come across accounts of travellers who had witnessed strange phenomena while passing through remote and uninhabited areas of land during the course of their journeys, especially during the night, such as a light streaking through darkness while they were passing through a lonely stretch of road in the night, or some odd figure suddenly appearing and then disappearing on the far end of the road, or some unexplained sound coming from the thickets on the side of the road, or some branch of a tree shaking violently though there was neither a strong wind nor any visible creature who could shake it, and so on and so forth. Surely such unusual sightings and sounds were caused by some Spirit that was roaming in the vicinity of the traveller. If that Spirit was holy and noble it would help the traveller in case he faced some unknown problems, but if that Spirit was evil it would cause hurdles and harm the traveller. In our case, the Spirit was that of a great sage or ascetic, and as soon as it discovered that Lord Ram was there, it immediately assumed a human form and revealed it's self in the form of an ascetic as described in these verses to pay homage and obeisance to his revered Lord.

(c) The third possibility is that he could have been some Angel who came to pay obeisance to Lord Ram and seek his blessings.

By any imagination, there is no other possibility except the ones enumerated herein above about who this unknown ascetic could have been.]

दो०. सजल नयन तन पुलकि निज इष्टदेउ पहिचानि ।
परेउ दंड जिमि धरनितल दसा न जाइ बखानि ॥ ११० ॥

dōhā.

sajala nayana tana pulaki nija iṣṭadē'u pahicāni.
parē'u daṇḍa jimi dharanitala dasā na jā'i bakhāni. 110.

Upon meeting Lord Ram, the eyes of this ascetic were filled with tears and his body was thrilled as he recognized his Lord whom he worshipped. So he prostrated before Lord Ram and fell down on the ground like a stick, so overwhelmed with emotions and ecstasy he was that his condition cannot be described in words. (Doha no. 110)

चौ०. राम सप्रेम पुलकि उर लावा । परम रंक जनु पारसु पावा ॥ १ ॥
मनहुँ प्रेम परमारथु दोऊ । मिलत धरें तन कह सबु कोऊ ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

rāma saprēma pulaki ura lāvā. parama raṅka janu pārasu pāvā. 1.
manahum̐ prēmu paramārathu dō'ū. milata dharē tana kaha sabu kō'ū. 2.

Lord Ram was thrilled when he saw the ascetic paying obeisance to him; the Lord immediately picked him up and affectionately embraced him as if a pauper had suddenly found the magical stone that turns any metal into gold or silver, i.e. the 'philosopher's stone' (called the "pāras" stone)¹. (1)

The meeting between Lord Ram and this unknown ascetic was like two personified forms of the virtues of love and affection on one side, and the fulfillment of spiritual objective of a soul to attain liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation on the other side, coming together so that the former is able to attain its objective in life, and the latter rewards the former for all its faith, devotion, sincerity and commitment to attain beatitude².

This was the unanimous view of everyone who saw the Lord and the ascetic meeting each other³. (2)

[Note—¹This comparison is to emphasize how greatly Lord Ram was happy and how overjoyed he felt when he met this stranger ascetic. When a poor man suddenly finds some priceless treasure, he feels exceedingly happy and jumps with joy, because now onwards all his poverty and its attendant problems would be a thing of the past.

²Lord Ram embraced the ascetic so enthusiastically and warmly as if the Lord and the ascetic were fast and dear friends who had met after a long time. This particular episode gives us a divine spiritual message—that the Lord God is ever-ready to welcome his devotee with a warm heart and greatest of affection, and though the world may not be aware of who this privileged and special person is, and though this

devotee had lived anonymously, without any pretension of his being pious and holy, without showing any visible sign of the depth of his closeness with the Lord—yet the Lord knows who he is, and the Lord would respond instantly and enthusiastically when this devotee approaches his revered Lord.

Another message is that the Lord God recognizes only one virtue in a creature that makes the latter endeared to the Lord—and it is love and affection for the Lord. It is the single-most important virtue that leads to success in one's spiritual pursuits. The other name for this virtue is devotion or Bhakti for the Lord.

In this imagery, the ascetic represents the virtue of love and affection, and Lord Ram the fulfillment of one's spiritual objectives in life.

³All those who were present on that occasion were held spell-bound by the warmth of this meeting—for it symbolized the union of the individual soul known as the Atma of the individual living being, with the universal Soul known as the Parmatma or the Supreme Being. It's an occasion of celebration, and it is marked by ecstasy and euphoria.]

बहुरि लखन पायन्ह सोइ लागा । लीन्ह उठाइ उमगि अनुरागा ॥ ३ ॥
पुनि सिय चरन धूरि धरि सीसा । जननि जानि सिसु दीन्हि असीसा ॥ ४ ॥

bahuri lakhana pāyanha sō'i lāgā. līnha uṭhā'i umagi anurāgā. 3.
puni siya carana dhūri dhari sīsā. janani jāni sisu dīnhi asīsā. 4.

Thence, the ascetic fell down and touched the feet of Laxman who was so overwhelmed with affection overflowing in his heart that he immediately lifted the ascetic (and embraced him). (3)

After that, the ascetic bent and lifted the dust of Sita's feet and placed it on his head. She blessed him affectionately like a mother would bless her child¹. (4)

[Note—¹We must not forget who Sita and Lord Ram actually were: Sita was the cosmic Mother, while Lord Ram was the Supreme Father of this creation—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 246 where this fact is explicitly mentioned.

Just like the case of parents meeting their child after a long time when they least expected to meet him, so was the case with Lord Ram and Sita meeting this stranger ascetic.]

कीन्ह निषाद दंडवत तेही । मिलेउ मुदित लखि राम सनेही ॥ ५ ॥
पिअत नयन पुट रूपु पियूषा । मुदित सुअसनु पाइ जिमि भूखा ॥ ६ ॥

kīnha niṣāda daṇḍavata tēhī. milē'u mudita lakhi rāma sanēhī. 5.
pi'ata nayana puṭa rūpu piyūṣā. mudita su'asanu pā'i jimi bhūkhā. 6.

After that, Nishad prostrated himself before the ascetic to pay his reverence to this exalted soul. The ascetic and Nishad met each other warmly and affectionately as they

saw each other as being dear and close to Lord Ram, which in turn created a bond of mutual affection between the two of them. (5)

Meanwhile, the ascetic looked intently at the heavenly beautiful and divine form of Lord Ram with the greatest of affection in his eyes, as if he was using the eyes as a medium to drink the nectar of bliss like a hungry person would do when he finds something delicious to partake of¹. (6)

[Note—¹A hungry person would relish each bit of delicious food and each sip of sweet drink that he finds by some good fortune. All his attention would be focused on his eating and drinking, and he would lose awareness of his surroundings. Similarly, this ascetic was engrossed in enjoying the bliss that he got by looking at the divine form of Lord Ram, so he kept his eyes riveted on the Lord.]

ते पितु मातु कहहु सखि कैसे । जिन्ह पठए बन बालक ऐसे ॥ ७ ॥
राम लखन सिय रूपु निहारी । होहिं सनेह बिकल नर नारी ॥ ८ ॥

tē pitu mātu kahahu sakhi kaisē. jinha paṭha'ē bana bālaka aisē. 7.
rāma lakhana siya rūpu nihārī. hōhīm sanēha bikala nara nārī. 8.

[That said, now we turn our attention once again to the villagers who had gathered together there to see Lord Ram.

The women folk talked amongst themselves about Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman, discussing and lamenting at their fate. They said to each other:]

‘Friend, say what kind of parents are they who would be so stern-hearted and pitiless as to have no compunctions or regrets while sending such (young, delicate, soft-spoken, courteous, nice, beautiful, noble and cultured) children to the forest!’ (7)

When the men and women folks of the countryside saw the beautiful form of Lord Ram, Laxman and Sita, all developed so great affection (and sympathy) for them that made them greatly agitated with distress, dismay and regret¹. (8)

[Note—¹A similar thing was experienced by other villagers too when Lord Ram reached Sringberpur—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 89.

In the present context, we have just read a little while ago about the villagers lamenting and regretting at the cruelty that was aimed at Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman by their heartless parent—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 110 herein above.

The lamentations and regrets of those who saw Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman on the path to the forest has been vividly and most poetically narrated in other versions of the story written by Goswami Tulsidas. For instance, refer to (a) Geetawali Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, verse nos. 26-27, 40; and (b) Kavitawali Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, verse no. 20.]

दो०. तब रघुबीर अनेक बिधि सखहि सिखावनु दीन्ह ।

राम रजायसु सीस धरि भवन गवनु तेइँ कीन्ह ॥ १११ ॥

dōhā.

taba raghubīra anēka bidhi sakhahi sikhāvanu dīnha.
rāma rajāyasu sīsa dhari bhavana gavanu tēim̐ kīnha. 111.

Then, Lord Ram comforted his friend (Guha Nishad) and explained the situation to him from different perspective to prevail upon him to return home (to Sringeripur).

Obeying Lord Ram's commands and advice, he (Guha) returned home¹. (Doha no. 111)

[Note—¹This Doha clearly points out the spot from where Lord Ram sent Guha Nishad back home—it was after the Lord had crossed river Yamuna, and before he proceeded onwards to sage Valmiki's hermitage.

At this juncture, this second chapter, i.e. 'Ayodhya Kand', of this fascinating story of Lord Ram called 'Ram Charit Manas' is split into two parts, which we can call two streams or two strands—because at the end of this chapter these two meet once again and we get on with our narrative as if cruising on the same river which has brought us to this point in the narrative where it split into two stream for some time, only to resume its course down the line.

So, the first of these two streams or strands of the story from now onwards takes us along with Lord Ram to sage Valmiki's hermitage, and on the advice of the sage he proceeded to a remote and scenic place amongst the hills, known by the name of Chitrakoot*1, where he would abide for quite sometime before moving ahead further south to the denser, more remote and dangerous parts of the forest to accomplish the twin purpose of his coming to the forest in the first place, which was, one, to bless the countless sages, hermits and ascetics who lived in these remote areas doing severe penances and austerities, and second, to eliminate the scourge of the demons having their capital further down in the island of Lanka*2.

The second stream describes Guha Nishad's journey home from the banks of river Yamuna from where Lord Ram asked him to go back. On his way home, Nishad found Sumantra in a pensive mood on the other side of river Ganges; he was sitting by the side of his chariot parked somewhere along the road*3, for the chief minister had become so distraught and disheartened after leaving Lord Ram behind that he was undecided what to do next, whether he should return home to Ayodhya as expected, or go somewhere else to hide his face out of shame and guilt for not being able to bring Lord Ram back. Somehow, Nishad comforted Sumantra, took the reins of the chariot himself and led it to his own place at Sringeripur, and from there Sumantra would go back to Ayodhya to report to king Dasrath and tell the dismayed king that he failed in his mission to bring Lord Ram back home*4. Then we shall read about Dasrath's death and Bharat's arrival, his shock and dismay upon being acquainted with the unfortunate developments in Ayodhya, his stern rebuke and scolding for his mother Kaikeyi, his refusal to accept the crown and instead go to the forest to appeal to Lord Ram to forgive him for his mother's most contemptible, irreverent, impudent and impertinent behaviour, and return home, Lord Ram declining to go back though the Lord explicitly made it clear that there is no hard feelings in him with respect to either Bharat or his mother, for the Lord has willingly taken this course to fulfill certain divine mandate which he was obliged to honour, Bharat returning back with the Lord's wooden sandals (footwear) which he would put on the throne of Ayodhya to symbolically mark Lord Ram's present, and go live like a hermit himself for the

entire time Lord Ram would live in the forest, i.e. for fourteen years*4. This will bring us to the end of this second chapter called ‘Ayodhya Kand’ of Ram Charit Manas.

{Refer to: *1 Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 112—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 142.

*2 = Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 1—right upto Lanka Kand, Doha no. 103.

*3 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 142—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 153.

*4 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 157—to Sortha no. 326 (i.e. end of Ayodhya Kand).}]

चौ०. पुनि सियँ राम लखन कर जोरी । जमुनहि कीन्ह प्रनामु बहोरी ॥ १ ॥

चले ससीय मुदित दोउ भाई । रबितनुजा कइ करत बड़ाई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

puni siyam̐ rāma lakhana kara jōrī. jamunahi kīnha pranāmu bahōrī. 1.
calē sasiya mudita dō'u bhāī. rabitanujā ka'i karata baṛāī. 2.

Then Sita, Lord Ram and Laxman offered their obeisance to the deity of river Yamuna by folding their hands, joining the respective palms, and lowering their heads as a gesture of great respect for the holy river¹. (1)

The two brothers (Lord Ram and Laxman) and by Sita cheerfully departed from there for their onwards journey to the next destination, all the while praising and glorifying river Yamuna who was the daughter of the Sun God² (rabitanujā). (2)

[Note—¹Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman had crossed river Yamuna and had already taken a bath in its waters as narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 109. Then, before departing from there on their onwards journey, the three prayed to the holy river and offered their obeisance to its patron deity, the goddess who represents Yamuna as described in the present verse.

²It is to be remarked here that while referring to river Yamuna, the word “rabitanujā”, meaning ‘daughter of the Sun God’, has been used. Lord Ram too belongs to the ‘Solar Race’, i.e. all the kings of his family had descended from the Sun God. That means that the goddess who represents river Yamuna, being the daughter of the Sun God, was related to Lord Ram and Laxman. This is why the Lord praised and glorified the goddess named Yamuna.

Let us now read briefly about Yamuna. It is one of the most sacred rivers of India, revered next only to river Ganga or Ganges, and honoured alongside river Saraswati. In fact, these three rivers—viz. Ganges, Yamuna and Saraswati—are regarded as the ‘Trinity of Rivers’, and the holy rivers of gods. Their confluence at a place known as ‘Triveni’ or Prayag (whose modern name is the city of Allahabad) is one of the holiest sites in India. In ancient times it was the seat of great sages and hermits, the most remarkable among them was sage Bharadwaj.

It finds mention in Rig Veda (the most ancient of the four Vedas) alongside Ganges—refer: Rig Veda, 10/75/5. It is mentioned in this Veda that king Sudaasa had

taken the help of the Trashtus to conquer the ten kings on its banks (refer: Rig Veda, 7/18/19). The legendary kings Bharat, Ambrisha and Shantaanu had performed many sacrifices on its banks. Similarly, the great sage Agastya (who is famed for drinking the entire ocean in a gulp) had done severe Tapa (penance and austerity) on the banks of Yamuna.

Lord Krishna, an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, had lived and did his worldly sport as a child on its banks where the twin cities of Mathura and Vrindavan are situated.

The river emerges from the Himalayan mountain ranges, from a particular mountain known by the name of 'Kalinidi'. Hence, this river is also known as 'Kaalindi'. After spouting out from the mighty Himalayas, it goes down the plains of northern India to merge with two other great rivers, Ganges and Saraswati, at Prayag. Since these three rivers merge here, this place is also known as 'Triveni' ["Tri" = three; "Veni" = a flowing stream; a river].

According to Puranic lore, Yamuna has other names also—such as 'Surya-tanaya' (or the daughter of the Sun God), and 'Shamanasvasaa'. Yamuna is called 'Surya-tanaya' because she is said to be the daughter of the 'Surya' (Sun God) and Sangya-devi. The god of death, Yam, is her twin brother. She had invited Yam (her brother) for a hearty meal on Kaartika-Shukla-Dvitiya day which falls immediately after the famous festival of lights known as 'Divaali' or 'Dipaawali'. Hence, it is considered auspicious for sisters to call their brothers on this day and feed them, as well as take a dip in the river Yamuna on this day.

It is believed that when Lord Shiva was overcome with grief at the loss of loving consort Sati (who had jumped into the fire and burnt herself when she discovered that Shiva had been insulted by her father during a fire sacrifice held by him), he had jumped into Yamuna out of grief, anger and frustration. This made the water turn black. Hence, the water of river Yamuna is mysteriously black in colour.

In images and iconography, Yamuna is depicted as a black goddess. She stands on a black tortoise, wears a garland of blue lotuses, and has two arms showing the 'Varada' and 'Abhaya' Mudras, meaning 'postures that grant boons and fearlessness'.]

पथिक अनेक मिलहिं मग जाता । कहहिं सप्रेम देखि दोउ भ्राता ॥ ३ ॥

राज लखन सब अंग तुम्हारे । देखि सोचु अति हृदय हमारे ॥ ४ ॥

pathika anēka milahim maga jātā. kahahim saprēma dēkhi dō'u bhrātā. 3.
rāja lakhana saba aṅga tumhārēm. dēkhi sōcu ati hṛdaya hamārēm. 4.

Many a travellers who met them (Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman) on the road as they gradually moved ahead in their journey were awed and mesmerized when they saw the most charming sight of the two brothers (moving along with Sita), and unable to restraint themselves and conceal their wonder, these travellers said most affectionately to the two brothers --- (3)

'Verily, all signs of royalty, majesty and greatness are apparent on your bodies¹, and this has greatly troubled our hearts and left us dismayed. [Why? This is answered in the following verses.] (4)

[Note—¹What were these special signs on the bodies of Lord Ram and Laxman that drew the attention of other travellers towards them; what made them stand out and be noticed by everyone they met on the road? Well, the answer is found in Valmiki's Ramayana, Sundar Kand, Canto 35, verse nos. 15-23 where Hanuman outlines the aura of majesty that surrounded Lord Ram when Sita asked him about the Lord to confirm and feel assured that Hanuman is indeed a messenger of the Lord and not some cunning fellow who has come to deceive her.

Let us see briefly what these signs were as described by Hanuman: He said, "Lord Ram is endowed with all the characteristics of the best among men, which are: broad shoulders, strong arms, powerful neck, lovely face, reddish eyes, deep voice, dark-brown coloured skin; he has firm chest, wrist and fist; he has long eyebrows, arms and scrotum; he has symmetrical locks, testicles and knees; he has strong bulging chest, abdomen and rim of the navel; reddish in the corner of his eyes, nails, palms and soles; the lines of his feet and hair; he has deep voice, gait and navel; three folds adorn the skin of his neck and his abdomen; the arch of his feet, the lines on his soles, and the nipples are deep; he has short generative organ, neck, back and shanks; three spirals adorn the hair on his head; there are four lines at the root of his thumb; and four lines on his forehead; he is four cubits tall; the four pairs of his limbs (cheeks, arms, shanks and knees) are symmetrical; even so the other fourteen pairs of limbs; his limbs are long. He is excellent in every way. Laxman, Lord Ram's brother, is also full of charm and excellence too."

Besides this, the signs of nobility, majesty and greatness that would mark a king and make him stand out in a crowd are enumerated in 'Samudrik Shastra', which is a part of Astrology. These signs are briefly the following: (1) A muscular and reddish sole of the feet; (2) A vertical line from the heel to the big toe; (3) The hairs on the body are black, short and soft; (4) The hip and the abdomen are muscular like that of a healthy lion; (5) The chest is muscular, high, broad and well-built; (6) The forearms are long, almost till the thighs or even till the knees, and strong, muscular like the trunk of an elephant; (7) The fingers of the hand are long, muscular and broad; (8) The back of the palm is like a serpent's hood; (9) The face is round, filled, radiant, attractive and charming to behold; (10) The neck is like a conch, having three horizontal lines that are marked as three folds of the skin when the neck is bent forward; (11) The lips are like red coral; (12) The eyes are like a pink lotus flower; (13) The ears are large, with broad earlobes but small ear-hole; (14) The forehead and head are broad and prominent, almost like an open umbrella over the face; (15) The part of forehead above the eyes and nose is like a bow, arched above the eyes with a flat link above the root of the nose; (16) The hairs on the head are jet-black, dense, soft, thin, straight strands (unless they are in the form of a curl).

Verily indeed, all the above listed signs were visible in Lord Ram and Laxman.]

मारग चलहु पयादेहि पाएँ । ज्योतिषु झूठ हमारेँ भाएँ ॥ ५ ॥

अगमु पंथु गिरि कानन भारी । तेहि महँ साथ नारि सुकुमारी ॥ ६ ॥

māraga calahu payādēhi pā'ēm̐. jyōtiṣu jhūṭha hamārēm̐ bhā'ēm̐. 5.

agamu panthu giri kānana bhārī. tēhi maham̐ sātha nāri sukumārī. 6.

We are amazed and dumbfounded that persons with such noble signs and majestic personalities, that imply they are great kings and noblemen in their own rights, would walk on foot like ordinary travellers on the road. This defies all our understanding.

It seems that our wise astrologers (jyōtiṣu) (who have outlined characteristics that enable them to predict all about a person, so much so that they can tell who he is, what his background is, as well as his future¹) are false and untrustworthy in what they say. (5)

It is so unbelievable and unimaginable for us that such persons would walk on a path that is so hazardous, rough and difficult to traverse, with so many mountains and hills en-route, and passing through so many great forests that are dense and intractable.

To compound this mystery and add to our amazement is the shocking fact that they are accompanied by a lady who is so tender (and young in age)². (6)

[Note—¹Refer to an elaborate note in this connection appended to verse nos. 3-4 herein above.

²This obviously is a reference to Sita.]

करि केहरि बन जाइ न जोई । हम सँग चलहिं जो आयसु होई ॥ ७ ॥
जाब जहाँ लगि तहँ पहुँचाई । फिरब बहोरि तुम्हहि सिरु नाई ॥ ८ ॥

kari kēhari bana jā'i na jō'ī. hama samṅa calahi jō āyasu hō'ī. 7.
jāba jahām'lagi taham'pahumcā'ī. phiraba bahōri tumhahi siru nā'ī. 8.

In the forest there are elephants and lions that are so dangerous and formidable that one would be scared even by their mere sight.

Say then, if you grant us your permission, should we accompany you till your destination? (7)

We will accompany (i.e. escort) you to wherever you wish to go, and after seeing you to your destination, we shall return (and continue with our own journeys) after bowing our heads before your majesties to pay our respects to you before departing.¹ (8)

[Note—¹We have read earlier that a similar sentiment was expressed by Guha Nishad in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-6 that precede Doha no. 104.

These strangers told Lord Ram that it was very dangerous to proceed alone and unprotected through the forests. In those days, travellers used to be armed and moved in large groups, but never alone or in twos and threes. Besides the wild animals, there was the constant threat from bandits, or getting lost on the way. Hence, these sympathetic travellers offered to escort Lord Ram till the Lord reaches his destination where he was headed, and then these travellers would return. By promising to 'return' they meant that the Lord ought not to worry about them as they would not bother him by being his uninvited guests at the place where he was going.

But these helpful and friendly travellers were not aware of who Lord Ram was, and what his great mission was, or that he had declined similar offers from those who were well-acquainted with him, such as his own citizens of Ayodhya, Sumantra

who was his chief minister, and Guha who was also his friend and lived within the domain of the great kingdom of Ayodhya of which Lord Ram was a prince. Still, their offer to accompany Lord Ram on his journey through the forest touched the Lord's heart, and he was moved by their unselfish, genuine and undiluted affection for the Lord.]

दो०. एहि बिधि पूँछहिं प्रेम बस पुलक गात जलु नैन ।
कृपासिंधु फेरहिं तिन्हहि कहि बिनीत मृदु बैन ॥ ११२ ॥

dōhā.

ēhi bidhi pūm̐chahiṁ prēma basa pulaka gāta jalu naina.
kṛpāsindhu phērahi tinhaḥi kahi binīta mṛdu baina. 112.

In this way, all the strangers and travellers whom Lord Ram met on the way were so overwhelmed with affection for the Lord that their bodies would be thrilled, their hearts exhilarated, and tears would fill their eyes.

However, Lord Ram, who was an ocean of mercy, compassion, grace and kindness (kṛpāsindhu), would request them, with most polite and courteous words, not to follow him, and instead resume their individual journeys. (Doha no. 112)

चौ०. जे पुर गाँव बसहिं मग माहीं । तिन्हहि नाग सुर नगर सिहाहीं ॥ १ ॥
केहि सुकृतीं केहि घरीं बसाए । धन्य पुन्यमय परम सुहाए ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

jē pura gām̐va basahiṁ maga māhīṁ. tinhaḥi nāga sura nagara sihāhīṁ. 1.
kēhi sukr̥tīṁ kēhi gharīṁ basā'ē. dhan'ya pun'yamaya parama suhā'ē. 2.

All the villages and hamlets that lay on either side of the way taken by Lord Ram to the forest became the envy of the magnificent and majestic cities where the Naagas (the Serpents who are deemed to be patron deities of the subterranean world) and the Gods (of heaven) lived, for the latter praised the former and glorified them for their good fortune (because Lord Ram, who was a personified form of the Supreme Being, had blessed the land where these villages and hamlets lay). (1)

These Naagas and Gods praised those great souls who had established these villages and hamlets, as well as those who lived there, including the patron deities of these places, exclaiming that all of them were meritorious, honourable, and worthy of praise. (2)

[Note—In these two verses, the cities of the Gods and the Naagas on the one hand, and on the other hand the Gods and the Naagas themselves who lived in these cities, praise their respective counterparts on earth, viz. the villages and hamlets that fell along the path on which Lord Ram traveled to the forest, and the residents of these places as well as the deities who presided there.

The reason for such high praise is given in verse nos. 3-8 that follow herein below.]

जहँ जहँ राम चरन चलि जाहीं । तिन्ह समान अमरावति नाहीं ॥ ३ ॥
 पुन्यपुंज मग निकट निवासी । तिन्हहि सराहहिं सुरपुरबासी ॥ ४ ॥
 जे भरि नयन बिलोकहिं रामहि । सीता लखन सहित घनस्यामहि ॥ ५ ॥

jaham̐ jaham̐ rāma carana cali jāhīm. tinha samāna amarāvati nāhīm. 3.
 pun'yapunja maga nikata nivāsī. tinhahi sarāhahim̐ surapurabāsī. 4.
 jē bhari nayana bilōkahim̐ rāmahi. sītā lakhana sahita ghanasyāmahi. 5.

All such places on earth where Lord Ram had set his holy feet were so glorious, and so highly worthy of honour and praise, that even the glory, opulence and majesty of Amravati (which is the capital city of Indra, the king of gods) could not match them. (3)

All the inhabitants who lived along or near the road traveled by Lord Ram were deemed to be most fortunate and as embodiments of all spiritual merits so much so that they evoked envy amongst the exalted Gods when the latter saw the former. (4)

[What was the reason that the Gods would praise so highly the humble way-side country folks? The answer is this—]

For these were the humble people who were blessed to have been able to see the divine and holy form of Lord Ram that was dark in complexion (ghanasyāmahi), alongside Sita and Laxman, till their eyes were filled with satisfaction. (5)

जे सर सरित राम अवगाहहिं । तिन्हहि देव सर सरित सराहहिं ॥ ६ ॥
 जेहि तरु तर प्रभु बैठहिं जाई । करहिं कलपतरु तासु बड़ाई ॥ ७ ॥
 परसि राम पद पदुम परागा । मानति भूमि भूरि निज भागा ॥ ८ ॥

jē sara sarita rāma avagāhahim̐. tinhahi dēva sara sarita sarāhahim̐. 6.
 jēhi taru tara prabhu baiṭhahim̐ jā'ī. karahim̐ kalapataru tāsu barā'ī. 7.
 parasi rāma pada paduma parāgā. mānati bhūmi bhūri nija bhāgā. 8.

All those rivers, streams and lakes where Lord Ram refreshed himself by taking a bath or drinking their water, all such water bodies, small and big, were praised and glorified by their counterparts in heaven. [To wit, the rivers, streams and lakes of heaven were all praise for their counterparts on earth because Lord Ram had blessed the latter by bathing in them and drinking their waters.] (6)

Those trees under which Lord Ram sat down to relax, all of them were lavishly praised by the Kalpa Tree (which is a evergreen tree of heaven that has the mystical power to fulfill all desires). (7)

When the earth touched the holy feet of Lord Ram, it considered itself most fortunate and blessed as if it was touching nectar dripping from a lotus flower¹. (8)

[Note—¹This verse can be interpreted as follows also: “When Lord Ram’s holy feet touched the dust on earth, the latter felt so happy as if it was no less than the pollen from a lotus flower.”]

दो०. छाँह करहिं घन बिबुधगन बरषहिं सुमन सिहाहिं ।
देखत गिरि बन बिहग मृग रामु चले मग जाहिं ॥ ११३ ॥

dōhā.

chām̐ha karahi ghana bibudhagana baraṣahi sumana sihāhiṁ.
dēkhata giri bana bihaga mṛga rāmu calē maga jāhiṁ. 113.

The clouds provide shade and the gods shower flowers (to soften the ground) in appreciation as Lord Ram moved along the path while looking at the surrounding beauty of Nature consisting of mountains and hills, as well as forests, birds and animals¹. (Doha no. 113)

[Note—¹Later on in our reading of this most charming story of Lord Ram we shall come to the point of time when Lord Ram and Laxman were wandering in the forest in search of Sita. There we read a similar narration of Lord Ram moving gradually through the vibrant greenery of the surrounding forest and pointing out its natural beauty, the beauty of the landscape and its flora and fauna, to Laxman. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 37—to Chaupai line no. 12 that precedes Doha no. 38.

We shall read about a similar situation when the clouds provided shade and the gods showered flowers on the path when Bharat was on his way to meet Lord Ram in Chitrakoot—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 216.]

चौ०. सीता लखन सहित रघुराई । गाँव निकट जब निकसहिं जाई ॥ १ ॥
सुनि सब बाल बृद्ध नर नारी । चलहिं तुरत गृहकाजु बिसारी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sītā lakhana sahita raghurāī. gām̐va nikāṭa jaba nikasahiṁ jāī. 1.
suni saba bāla bṛd'dha nara nārī. calahiṁ turata gṛhakāju bisārī. 2.

Whenever Lord Ram, accompanied by Sita and Laxman, passed by any of the villages and hamlets lying on their way as they moved onwards to the forest, --- (1)

--- No sooner the inhabitants of these places heard of the passage of Lord Ram and his companions nearby, all of them, the young and the old, the men and the women, would rush out instantly to meet the Lord, abandoning whatever chores they were engaged in at that moment². (2)

[Note—¹A similar development happened in Janakpur earlier. When Lord Ram and Laxman went out to see the city, and as soon as this news spread like wildfire that the two noble princes have come for a visit of sightseeing in the city, people left whatever work they were doing at that time and dashed out into the streets in hordes, children

and men of all age groups, to see the two princes. They were all extremely excited, and jostled with each other to get closer to the Lord. A huge train of exuberant citizens of Janakpur followed Lord Ram and Laxman wherever they went. The women folk, in the meanwhile, flocked to the terraces, windows and balconies of their homes to have a glimpse of the two divine brothers, and chatted animatedly about them. The crowd was so thick that Lord Ram had to virtually move at a snail's pace, and was late in coming back to report to sage Vishwamitra. This episode is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 220—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 225.

When Lord Ram's marriage party was on its way from Janakpur to Ayodhya, all the villagers on the way were exhilarated when they saw the beautiful sight of Lord Ram—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 343.

Presently too, we have read a little while earlier that when Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman reached the banks of river Ganges, Guha Nishad, the chief of the boatmen community, and a large number of his kin and community members had rushed forward to meet Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 89.

Then we read that when Lord Ram and his companions had crossed river Yamuna, took their bath in the waters of the river, and were getting ready to move on, all the villagers of the surrounding area rushed to meet the Lord—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 109 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that follow it.

Later on in the story we shall read that gods and their junior counterparts called the naagas, kinnars, dikpals etc., the hill-dwelling tribes, as well as the numerous sages, hermits, ascetics and mystics who lived in the forest—all would rush to meet Lord Ram as soon they learnt of the Lord passing their way, or staying for sometime in their vicinity. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 108 (at Bhardwaj's hermitage) (i) Doha no. 134 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it, and Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that follow it; (ii) Doha no. 237 (at Chitrakoot); (b) Aranya Kand, (iii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 9 (deep in the dandakaryna forest).]

राम लखन सिय रूप निहारी । पाइ नयनफलु होहिं सुखारी ॥ ३ ॥

सजल बिलोचन पुलक सरीरा । सब भए मगन देखि दोउ बीरा ॥ ४ ॥

rāma lakhana siya rūpa nihārī. pā'i nayanaphalu hōhiṁ sukhārī. 3.
sajala bilōcana pulaka sarīrā. saba bha'ē magana dēkhi dō'u bīrā. 4.

By beholding the bewitching beauty of Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman, all those who saw them derived immense satisfaction and bliss by seeing this divine sight, as if they have been amply rewarded for possessing eyesight (because it was this faculty of their body which enabled them to symbolically drink this nectar of bliss). (3)

Verily indeed, all of them had tears in their eyes and their bodies were thrilled even as they were mesmerized and spell-bound by the magnificent sight they beheld¹. (4)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 220; (ii) Doha no. 242—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 244 (at Janakpur); (b) Ayodhya Kand, (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 89 (on banks of river Ganges); (iv) Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 108 (at Bhardwaj's hermitage); (v) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 109; (vi) Chaupai line no. 8 that precede Doha no. 111 (on the banks of river Yamuna).

Refer also to: Geetawali Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, verse no. 18.]

बरनि न जाइ दसा तिन्ह केरी । लहि जनु रंकन्ह सुरमनि ढेरी ॥ ५ ॥
एकन्ह एक बोलि सिख देहीं । लोचन लाहु लेहु छन एहीं ॥ ६ ॥

barani na jā'i dasā tinha kērī. lahi janu rañkanha suramani ḍhērī. 5.
ēkanha ēka bōli sikha dēhīm. lōcana lāhu lēhu chana ēhīm. 6.

The emotional condition of the heart and the mesmerized state of the mind of all those who saw Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman were such that no words can describe them. Their joy and happiness were so intense that it can be likened to that of a pauper who has suddenly laid his hands on a great heap of precious gems¹. (5)

They called each other and advised their neighbours to derive the pleasure of having eyesight by beholding the magnificent view that presented itself before them right at that very moment (for later on, once Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman moved on and went away, they would be left with nothing but to regret at having missed this rare and golden opportunity of a lifetime²). (6)

[Note—¹The pauper would be speechless with astonishment coupled with excitement and joy; he would not know what to say or do; his senses would become numb, and he would just stand gaping at the heap of gems in a stunned daze, with an open mouth and wide eyes. Likewise, those who saw Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman were stunned by their beauty and charm so much that they stood looking fixedly at the three. The villagers' bodies were thrilled, their eyes were wet with tears, and affection and sympathy for Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman surged inside their hearts like great waves of an ocean.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 121 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it.]

रामहि देखि एक अनुरागे । चितवत चले जाहिं सँग लागे ॥ ७ ॥
एक नयन मग छबि उर आनी । होहिं सिथिल तन मन बर बानी ॥ ८ ॥

rāmahi dēkhi ēka anurāgē. citavata calē jāhīm samṅa lāgē. 7.
ēka nayana maga chabi ur ānī. hōhīm sithila tana mana bara bānī. 8.

Some amongst those who saw Lord Ram were so enraptured by the magnetic charm of the Lord and attracted to him that they followed him as if in a hypnotic daze. (7)

Others just stood gazing at the Lord and brought his image inside their hearts by the medium of their eyes, feeling so numbed in their bodies that they could say nothing, do nothing, and think of nothing. (8)

[Note—We find that there were two types of responses amongst the onlookers—one group of people were so charmed by Lord Ram that they followed him as if they were under some hypnotic spell, and the other group consisted of those who were so dazed with amazement that they just stood like a statue gazing at Lord Ram. These latter people looked so intently at Lord Ram for a long time that the Lord's beautiful image was etched on the canvas of their hearts and minds as if the image was permanently carved on stone, for these people would never forget the divine form of Lord Ram for the rest of their lives.

In this context, we can refer to the condition of sage Sutikshan when he came to know that Lord Ram was going to come in his direction. The sage was mad with joy; he would run here and there, not knowing where he was going, and then suddenly he stood still; sometimes he sang and then become dumb; sometimes he would dance and sometimes sing and then jumped and hopped. He behaved like a man who has lost his mental bearing. Then, he entered into a state of trance that comes in higher stages of spiritual ecstasy when the sage became unaware of both his own body as well as his surroundings, so much so that when Lord Ram actually came near, the sage was not even aware of the Lord's physical presence. This is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-17 that precede Doha no. 10.]

दो०. एक देखि बट छाँह भलि ड़ासि मृदुल तृन पात ।
कहहिं गवाँइअ छिनुकु श्रमु गवनब अबहिं कि प्रात ॥ ११४ ॥
dōhā.

ēka dēkhiṁ baṭa chāmṁha bhali ḍāsi mṛdula tṛna pāta.
kahahiṁ gavāṁī'a chinuku śramu gavanaba abahiṁ ki prāta. 114.

Some amongst those who came to see Lord Ram and his companions (Sita and Laxman) pointed out the shade of a banyan tree, and saying that they would spread soft leaves and grass on the ground there to form a sitting mat, they requested the Lord to take some time off to rest there before moving ahead on his journey the next morning¹. (Doha no. 114)

[Note—¹Guha Nishad had done a similar thing on the banks of river Ganges where Lord Ram and Sita had rested for the night. Guha and his companions had also offered fruits, edible stems and roots, as well as water to the Lord as refreshment. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 89 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede it.

This way, these humble devotees thought that they would get an opportunity to offer some refreshments to Lord Ram, help him to relax and get over his tiredness of the long journey on foot, as well as to spend some quality time with him, talking with the Lord and serving him as best as they can.]

चौ०. एक कलस भरि आनहिं पानी । अँचइअ नाथ कहहिं मृदु बानी ॥ १ ॥
 सुनि प्रिय बचन प्रीति अति देखी । राम कृपाल सुसील बिसेषी ॥ २ ॥
 जानी श्रमित सीय मन माहीं । घरिक बिलंबु कीन्ह बट छाहीं ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

ēka kalasa bhari ānahim pānī. am̐ca'i'a nātha kahahim mṛdu bānī. 1.
 suni priya bacana prīti ati dēkhī. rāma kṛpāla susīla bisēṣī. 2.
 jānī śramita sīya mana māhīm. gharika bilambu kīnha baṭa chāhīm. 3.

Some amongst those who had come (to see Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman) brought a pitcher of water¹, and placing it before Lord Ram said sweetly: 'Oh Lord, please rinse your mouth and sip some water (to quench your thirst as well as to refresh yourself).' (1)

When Lord Ram heard their earnest request, and at the same time observed that these humble villagers had immense affection and warmth for him, Lord Ram wanted to oblige them, especially because he is exceptionally noble, courteous, merciful, kind and gracious, and he would go out of his way to reciprocate such gestures. (2)

Further, the Lord also perceived that Sita was tired², and therefore it would be in fitness of things if he breaks the journey for a while to take some rest (as this would serve two purposes simultaneously, for it would oblige the villagers, and at the same time it will give Sita some rest). (3)

[Note—¹Earlier we have read that the villagers who had come along with Guha Nishad to meet Lord Ram on the banks of river Ganges, had placed before the Lord 'cups' made either of dried earth, or from leaves folded in the manner of small cups—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 89.

But here we read that these villagers have brought 'pitchers' full of water for Lord Ram so that he can rinse his mouth, drink water, and even sprinkle some water on his face and hands to cool himself if he so wishes.

²Surely, Sita was not at all accustomed to such long and strenuous journey on foot. She was a princess, and had never stepped out of her palace to walk on long and rough paths of the countryside. Her mother-in-law, Kaushalya, was shocked when she learnt that Sita wished to go to the forest with Lord Ram, for it was unimaginable for her to even think that Sita, who was so tender in body, had a delicate frame, and was accustomed to nothing but comforts of a royal household, would ever be able to cope with the immensity of hardships and toils of a forest life, such as walking on foot through rough terrain over vast tracts of land consisting of hills, mountains, rivers and forests, sleeping on the ground, having bland and erratic diet, facing the vagaries of Nature, seasons that would be cold, rainy and hot, and so on and so forth. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 58—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 60.}

Lord Ram too had tried his best to dissuade her from accompanying him to the wilds citing similar reasons, warning her that if she insists in coming along, then she would get nothing but misery and suffering in return. {Refer: Refer: Ram Charit

Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 62—to Doha no. 63.}

Sita was very brave, courageous and determined. It goes to her credit that she hasn't uttered a word of complaint regarding her discomfort or weariness to Lord Ram. Nevertheless, the Lord could perceive her tiredness and difficulties in walking; he realized that she needed immediate rest. So, when the villagers showed their warmth of welcome to Lord Ram, as well as had wished that the Lord take some rest at their place so they can serve him for sometime, the Lord felt that he must oblige these loving souls who had so much affection for him, for it was not in his nature to overlook or neglect someone's expression of warm emotions for him.

The Lord therefore thought that if he breaks his journey for a night, it will serve two purposes: first, he would be reciprocating the warmth the villagers have shown to him by accepting their request for a halt; second, it will give Sita some time to take rest, for the Lord realized that she needs it urgently.

In Geetawali Ramayan, however, we read of a different picture. There we read that Sita got tired quite soon after leaving Ayodhya, and she asked Lord Ram wearily if they have long to go to reach their destination. This was a sign of her great discomfort even at the very outset of the long-haul journey to the distant forest, not for one or two days or weeks or months, but for fourteen long years. It was a very poignant moment, and it filled the Lord with pity for her. Refer: Geetawali Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, verse nos. 13-14.]

मुदित नारि नर देखहिं सोभा । रूप अनूप नयन मनु लोभा ॥ ४ ॥

एकटक सब सोहहिं चाहूँ ओरा । रामचंद्र मुख चंद चकोरा ॥ ५ ॥

mudita nāri nara dēkhahim sōbhā. rūpa anūpa nayana manu lōbhā. 4.
ēkaṭaka saba sōhahim cahum̐ ōrā. rāmacandra mukha canda cakōrā. 5.

The exhilarated men and women folk looked at the unmatched bewitching beauty of Lord Ram that enchanted their minds and hearts as well as their eyes¹. (4)

People surrounded Lord Ram from all sides, forming a wide circle around him, and everyone gazed unblinkingly at the face of the Lord like the Chakor bird gazes at the full moon². (5)

[Note—¹The magnificent charm and beauty of Lord Ram had mesmerized the citizens of Janakpur too—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 219 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it; (ii) Doha no. 233 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it; (iii) Doha no. 242—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 244; (iv) Chaupai line nos. 1-10 that precede Doha no. 327.

Refer also to: (a) Kavitali Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, verse nos. 14-19, 22-26; and (b) Geetawali Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, verse nos. 15-42.

²The 'Chakor' (Indian red-legged partridge) is so enamoured of the moon that as soon as the disc of the full moon rises in the eastern horizon, the bird starts staring at it. The bird then continues gazing at the moon, tilting its head and follows the path of the moon across the night sky, till it sets in the western horizon. Likewise, the enchanted

villagers gazed at the charming face of Lord Ram unwaveringly; they virtually lost awareness of everything else except Lord Ram's presence.]

तरुन तमाल बरन तनु सोहा । देखत कोटि मदन मनु मोहा ॥ ६ ॥
 दामिनि बरन लखन सुठि नीके । नख सिख सुभग भावते जी के ॥ ७ ॥
 मुनिपट कटिन्ह कसें तूनीरा । सोहहिं कर कमलनि धनु तीरा ॥ ८ ॥

taruna tamāla barana tanu sōhā. dēkhata kōṭi madana manu mōhā. 6.
 dāmini barana lakhana suṭhi nīkē. nakha sikha subhaga bhāvatē jī kē. 7.
 munipaṭa kaṭinha kasēm tūnīrā. sōhahim kara kamalini dhanu tīrā. 8.

Lord Ram's form (body; countenance) had a glowing dark complexion like that of a young black catechu plant (*Xanthocymus epictorius*)¹, which was so attractive that it would enamour the mind and the heart of countless Kaamdeo, the patron deity of beauty, magnificence and charm². (6)

The complexion of Laxman is very fair, like the glow of light; his entire body³, from the tip of the toe right upto his head, looks so charming and radiant that it is pleasant to behold him. (7)

The two brothers are attired in the habit of hermits⁴, they have quivers tied around their waists, and hold a bow and arrow in their lotus-like hands (i.e. left hand holds the bow, and the right hand the arrow)⁵. (8)

[Note—¹Lord Ram was young in age and had a dark complexion; hence he is compared to a 'young' catechu plant which is dark in colour. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 221.

²Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 220; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 327.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 221.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2 and 8 that precede Doha no. 79.

⁵Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 219 along with Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede it; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 221.]

दो०. जटा मुकुट सीसनि सुभग उर भुज नयन बिसाल ।
 सरद परब बिधु बदन बर लसत स्वेद कन जाल ॥ ११५ ॥
 dōhā.

jaṭā mukuṭa sīsani subhaga ura bhuja nayana bisāla.
sarada paraba bidhu badana bara lasata svēda kana jāla. 115.

They (i.e. Lord Ram and Laxman) have a crown of matted hairs on their heads¹. Their chest, arms eyes are broad². Drops of sweat resembling beads of pearls glistened on their beauteous faces³ that resembled a full moon. (Doha no. 115)

[Note—¹Lord Ram and Laxman had assumed the form of a hermit, and so it was natural that they would also sport matted hairs on their heads, which looked like a crown over their broad foreheads.

²Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 219.

³Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 233.

Refer also to: Kavitawali Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, verse no. 13.]

चौ०. बरनि न जाइ मनोहर जोरी । सोभा बहुत थोरि मति मोरी ॥ १ ॥
राम लखन सिय सुंदरताई । सब चितवहिं चित मन मति लाई ॥ २ ॥
थके नारि नर प्रेम पिआसे । मनहुँ मृगी मृग देखि दिआ से ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

barani na jā'i manōhara jōrī. sōbhā bahuta thōri mati mōrī. 1.
rāma lakhana siya sundaratā'ī. saba citavahiṁ cita mana mati lā'ī. 2.
thakē nāri nara prēma pi'āsē. manahum' mrgī mrga dēkhi di'ā sē. 3.

Tulsidas (the learned saint-poet who wrote this epic book Ram Charit Manas) says: 'The pairs¹ looked so exceptionally wonderful and magnificent that I cannot describe them in words, because my intellect has a limited ability and it cannot do justice the charm and the beauty of the sight that everyone beheld².

[To wit, since words have their own limitations, they cannot do justice to how glad and exhilarated the eyes, the mind and the heart of those who beheld the bewitching beauty and charm of the pairs felt at that time, for all such attempts to describe them would fall short of the reality and fail expectations from a poet who is supposed to paint a perfect pen-portrait of what is physically seen.] (1)

The bewitching charm and magnificent beauty of Lord Ram, Laxman and Sita was so overwhelming and a virtual feast for the eyes of everyone who came to see them that all stood mesmerized as they gazed at them intently, with their mind, their heart and their emotions riveted on the sight of unparalleled beauty that they beheld³. (2)

The men and women folk were so overwhelmed with love and affection that they were like thirsty individuals not having enough of nectar to drink. Further, their conditions can be compared to a deer couple, the male and the female, who remain standing in a daze when they see the light of a flame⁴. (3)

[Note—¹The poet here has shown his skill with the use of words though, for he has used the word “pair” (jōrī) to imply that the indescribable charm and beauty that he refers to applies to two pairs—viz. Lord Ram and Laxman on the one hand, and Lord Ram and Sita on the other hand. Instead of the word ‘pair’, suppose he had used the word “couple”, then it would have meant ‘Lord Ram and Sita’ only, as the word ‘couple’ is normally applied to two married individuals.

That the learned poet means all the three, i.e. Lord Ram, Laxman and Sita, is clear in verse no. 2 itself.

²A similar idea that something which huge and so spectacular that it cannot be contained in a limited space is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 257 that says “an ocean cannot be accommodated in the space of a small snail’s shell”.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 323 (beauty of Sita); (ii) Doha no. 219 along with Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precede it; and (iii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 220 (beauty of Lord Ram and Laxman).

A similar narration is found in Kavitawali Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, verse nos. 15, 17.

³The beauty of Lord Ram was so spectacular that when king Manu and his wife Satrupa did Tapa (penance) to have a divine vision of the Lord, and the Lord fulfilled their wish by revealing himself before them, the couple were so charmed with the sight of the Lord that they gazed at him un-blinkingly but could not satisfy themselves, for if they had their way they would have continued to gaze at the Lord for a very-very long time. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 148.

This was also the case with Sita—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 232.

⁴When deer-trappers want to catch live deer, they would set a bonfire in the forest near the path usually taken by their herds. When the deer sees the glowing flames of the fire, it is so dazed at the sight that it would stand still for quite sometime, and then gradually move towards this source of light. Then the deer-catcher would either ensnare the unsuspecting animal directly by throwing a loop, or the latter would fall into a trench dug in the ground and covered by leaves a little away from the fire.

In this metaphor, the men and the women of the villages are like the male and the female deer, while the glamour and charm of Lord Ram and his companions, Laxman and Sita, is like the glow of the flame of the fire that attracts and charms the deer.

Refer also to: Geetawali Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, verse nos. 37, 82.]

सीय समीप ग्रामतिय जाहीं । पूँछत अति सनेहँ सकुचाहीं ॥ ४ ॥

बार बार सब लागहिं पाँँ । कहहिं बचन मृदु सरल सुभाँँ ॥ ५ ॥

sīya samīpa grāmatiya jāhīm. pūm̐chata ati sanēham̐ sakucāhīm. 4.

bāra bāra saba lāgahīm pā'ēm̐. kahahīm bacana mṛdu sarala subhā'ēm̐. 5.

The village women went near Sita out of their immensity of affection for her, for they wished to talk with her and ask her some questions, but they felt hesitant in doing so¹. (4)

These women touched the feet of Sita repeatedly (to show their respect to her), and then spoke to her with sweet voices, in an innocent manner that was unpretentious and simple in style. (5)

[Note—¹Why were these women hesitating in approaching Sita and talking with her? Well, from her countenance, demeanours, general appearance and gestures, Sita obviously looked like a princess, someone of a royal birth who was certainly more cultured than the rural folk. This will be clear in the next verse no. 6.

Hence, these ordinary women were shy in approaching Sita, as they were not sure whether Sita would like to talk with ordinary people, or would like them to come near her, and also because they were not sure what to say, or how to ask questions, or how to talk with a stranger who seems so different from all others they have met in their lives so far. But at the same time, their curiosity was so great that they could not hold themselves back, and mustered courage to approach Sita to speak with her.]

राजकुमारि बिनय हम करहीं । तिय सुभायँ कछु पूँछत डरहीं ॥ ६ ॥
स्वामिनि अबिनय छमबि हमारी । बिलगु न मानब जानि गवाँरी ॥ ७ ॥
राजकुअँर दोउ सहज सलोने । इन्ह तें लही दुति मरकत सोने ॥ ८ ॥

rājakumāri binaya hama karahīm. tiya subhāyam̐ kachu pūm̐chata ḍarahīm. 6.
svāmini abinaya chamabi hamārī. bilagu na mānaba jāni gavām̐rī. 7.
rājaku'am̐ra dō'u sahaja salōnē. inha tēm̐ lahī duti marakata sōnē. 8.

The women folk said reverentially: 'Oh princess (rājakumāri)! We humbly submit to you that we want to make a prayerful request to you, though we are hesitating to ask you anything because as women we are naturally afraid to approach a stranger with queries. (6)

Oh mistress (svāmini), please forgive us for our impudence, and please don't mind it by considering the fact that we are uneducated, uncultured, and do not have a refined intellect, which makes us coarse in our talks. (7)

Prithee, the two princes (who are accompanying you) are naturally so charming and glamorous that it appears that they have lent a part of their brilliant radiance to sapphire and gold respectively to enable the latter two to have their own radiance and glow (but surely it is borrowed from these two princes)¹. (8)

[Note—¹In this analogy, the dark blue radiant complexion of Lord Ram seems to have lent its glow to sapphire, while gold seems to have borrowed its glow from the fair complexion of Laxman.

Refer also to: (a) Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 115; (b) Kavitawali Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, verse no. 23.]

दो०. स्यामल गौर किसोर बर सुंदर सुषमा ऐन ।
सरद सर्बरीनाथ मुखु सरद सरोरुह नैन ॥ ११६ ॥

dōhā.

syāmala gaura kisōra bara sundara suṣamā aina.
sarada sarbarīnātha mukhu sarada sarōruha naina. 116.

These two princes are of a dark and fair complexion respectively; they are in their teens; they are a treasury of the virtues of beauty and charm of the best quality¹.

Not only that, their faces resemble the beauty of the full moon's disc during the night of autumn², and their eyes are like the lotus flower seen during that season. (Doha no. 116)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 219; (ii) Doha no. 220; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 221; (iv) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 329; (b) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 115.

Refer also to: Geetawali Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, verse nos. 22 (stanza 1), 23 (stanza 2), 25 (stanza 1).

²Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 233 (with respect to the face).

³Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 233 (with respect to the eyes).

In the context of this Doha describing the bewitching beauty of Lord Ram and Laxman, refer to: (a) Geetawali Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, verse nos. 15-30; and (b) Kavitali Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, verse nos. 13, 15, 21.]

[PAUSE 4 FOR A NINE-DAY RECITATION]

[PAUSE 16 FOR A THIRTY-DAY RECITATION]

चौ०. कोटि मनोज लजावनिहारे । सुमुखि कहहु को आहिं तुम्हारे ॥ १ ॥
सुनि सनेहमय मंजुल बानी । सकुची सिय मन महुँ मुसुकानी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kōṭi manōja lajāvanihārē. sumukhi kahahu kō āhiṁ tumhārē. 1.
suni sanēhamaya mañjula bānī. sakucī siya mana mahum̐ musukānī. 2.

Verily indeed, they put to shame countless Kamdeos (the patron god of beauty and charm) by their own beauty and charm¹.

Prithee, please be kind to inform us who they are, and what relationship they have with you?² (1)

When Sita heard these sweet and kind words of the women folk, words that were soaked in affection and sympathy for her, she smiled within herself, and felt little abashed³. (2)

[Note—¹Refer: (a) Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 243; (b) Kavitawali Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, verse nos. 16 and 29; (c) Geetawali Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, verse nos. 18 (stanza 3), 24 (stanza 2), 26 (stanza 2), 29 (stanza 2), 30 (stanza 1), 39 (stanza 2).

²This conversation between Sita and the women folk of the villages falling on the route to the forest has also been narrated in Tulsidas's book "Kavitawali Ramayan", Ayodhya Kand, verse nos. 21-22.

³Why did Sita feel abashed or shy? Well, she was young and beautiful, and she was walking on the path to the forest accompanied by two young boys attired as hermits, not as princes. No one knew who they were, hence it was natural to have aroused curiosity in all those who saw her with two handsome young gentlemen. So, when this innocent question was asked about her 'relationship with the two gentlemen in their teens', it was obvious for her to feel shy as it meant many things regarding her relationship with the two teen-aged boys as well as their character, something that need not be elaborated here as it would violate decorum and dignity of the narrative, which is not the intent at all, but which can be easily imagined by any modern reader who would see a similar sight deep down in the countryside, somewhere away from the modern lifestyle of a city.]

तिन्हि बिलोकि बिलोकति धरनी । दुहुँ सकोच सकुचति बरबरनी ॥ ३ ॥
सकुचि सप्रेम बाल मृग नयनी । बोली मधुर बचन पिकबयनी ॥ ४ ॥

tinahi bilōki bilōkati dharanī. duhum̐ sakōca sakucati barabaranī. 3.
sakuci saprēma bāla mṛga nayanī. bōlī madhura bacana pikabayanī. 4.

Sita first glanced at the ladies (who enquired of her about the two young gentlemen accompanying her and their relationships with her), and then (feeling abashed to give them a direct answer regarding their query) she lowered her sight and looked at the ground near her feet shyly.

The most noble and courteous Sita was now in a great dilemma: whether she should tell these ladies who the two noble princes were and their relationship with her, or should she keep quiet and desist from answering them at all¹. (3)

Sita, the princess who had beautiful eyes like that of a fawn, spoke in an affectionate tone with a sweet voice like that of a cuckoo (as she replied to the ladies who had asked her the question). (4)

[Note—¹Why was Sita so hesitant in giving a reply? According to traditional Hindu custom, a married lady should not directly speak or look to her husband in public, and

neither should she pronounce her husband's name directly, either to call him or to tell his name to others. This was the first reason for her hesitancy to reply.

The second reason for her dilemma was that if she did not answer the question pertaining to her relationship with these two handsome and young gentlemen, and preferred to deflect the query instead, then it would create a mighty scandal and become a fodder for nonsense gossip that would spread like a raging wildfire, bringing to disrepute and cast a shadow of ignominy on the honourable and chaste character of all the three of them, as well as their noble and righteous family.

Hence, after pondering over the matter for a moment, Sita thought it wise not to set a fire of nasty gossip-and-scandal alight by keeping quiet, but douse the unwarranted flame even before it causes any damage to their reputation—which she would do with dexterity and skill in the verses that follow, by maintaining her dignity and decorum while giving an answer to satisfy and permanently put to rest the curiosity raised in the mind of the country folks.]

सहज सुभाय सुभग तन गोरे । नामु लखनु लघु देवर मोरे ॥ ५ ॥
 बहुरि बदनु बिधु अंचल ढाँकी । पिय तन चितइ भौंह करि बाँकी ॥ ६ ॥
 खंजन मंजु तिरीछे नयननि । निज पति कहेउ तिन्हहि सियँ सयननि ॥ ७ ॥
 भई मुदित सब ग्रामबधूटीं । रंकन्ह राय रासि जनु लूटीं ॥ ८ ॥

sahaja subhāya subhaga tana gōrē. nāmu lakhanu laghu dēvara mōrē. 5.
 bahuri badanu bidhu añcala dhām̐kī. piya tana cita'i bhaunha kari bām̐kī. 6.
 kharjāna manju tirīchē nayanani. nija pati kahē'u tinahi siyam̐ sayanani. 7.
 bha'īm mudita saba grāmabadhūṭīm. rañkanha rāya rāsi janu lūṭīm. 8.

Sita said: 'The prince who is by nature is straightforward and upright, and who has a fair complexion—his name is Laxman. He is my younger brother-in-law.' [This is an answer that settles the first part of the question.] (5)

Then she covered her moon-like beautiful face by veiling it with one end of her long wearing apparel (called the Sari), and raising the corner of her eyebrow she glanced obliquely in the direction of her dear husband (Lord Ram). (6)

By glancing sideways with her beautiful eyes in the manner a 'Khanjan' bird (the wagtail) would look at anything, she hinted about her relationship with the other noble prince, i.e. Lord Ram—that he was her husband.

[The sideways glance and the way Sita cocked up her eyebrows and looked abashedly at Lord Ram gave sufficient hint to the women folk that this second gentleman was her husband, though Sita didn't explicitly say so. The women were fully aware of the custom that a married woman would not utter the name of her husband in public, and that it was this requirement of modesty and decorum that Sita was observing now. This answered the second part of the question asked by these countryside women folk.]¹ (7)

No sooner the ladies of the villages came to know about the purity and honorable nature of the relationship between the three of them (Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman), than they were filled with excess of joy, and were so exhilarated that they resembled

a bunch of paupers who have been given a rare opportunity of a lifetime to loot a royal treasury as much as they can carry with them². (8)

[Note—¹Laxman was like a son to Sita, and hence there was no problem in saying his name and who he was. On the other hand, Lord Ram was her husband, and so requirements of modesty, dignity, honour and decorum constrained Sita from uttering her husband's name or telling what relationship the Lord had with her. But the country folks immediately picked up her hint and understood that she was the other prince's wife by her gestures—looking down and sideways, a shy smile, a gentle nod of the head.

Another significant point to be observed here is that Sita first tells who Laxman was—that he was her brother-in-law, hence related to her. Obviously then the other gentleman (i.e. Lord Ram) must also be a close relative, for otherwise it is not possible for a brother-in-law and his sister-in-law to walk alone far away from home in the company of a stranger who was not related to them. Now, who was the second prince? Sita answered this question by her gestures which gave a clear hint about her relationship with this other gentleman.

²In the scenario sighted here, imagine what would happen: No sooner the news gets around that the royal treasury is to be made free for a limited time, and everyone was invited to grab what he can before it closes, there would be a mad rush as everyone would scramble for it, trying to reach first and grab the biggest pie; jostling, pushing, elbowing, trampling upon each other's foot, and doing everything possible to be in the front row of the crowd when the gates are opened, to ensure that one can grab as much of the treasures he can before it is too late.

Likewise, after it was clear that the relationship between the three strangers was noble and above board, that there was nothing scandalous concerning these travellers, the men and the women folk of the villages were elated, for now they were glad that they are showing their affection and regards to someone who were righteous and virtuous by nature, and not of a doubtful or tainted character.

Once this was clear, even those who were standing at a little distance till now, uncertain whether or not to come closer to these strangers, were able to overcome their reluctance and flocked around Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman to offer personal wishes, services and obeisance to them. They knew that this joy of interacting with the three wonderful travellers would be for a short while, because soon they would be moving ahead on their journey to the next destination. So therefore, these humble country folks wished to derive the maximum joy in the limited time that was available to them—like the paupers who would rush to grab the treasures during the limited time that it is available for free.]

दो०. अति सप्रेम सिय पायँ परि बहुबिधि देहिं असीस ।

सदा सोहागिनि होहु तुम्ह जब लगि महि अहि सीस ॥ ११७ ॥

dōhā.

ati saprēma siya pāyam̐ pari bahubidhi dēhim̐ asīsa.

sadā sōhāgini hōhu tumha jaba lagi mahi ahi sīsa. 117.

The overjoyed village women reverentially held Sita's feet and blessed her profusely, saying: 'We wish you a eternal and happy married life¹ for as long as the earth is held by Lord Seshnath (the celestial serpent) on its hood (i.e. as long as there is life on earth).' (Doha no. 117)

[Note—¹A similar blessing is granted to Sita by all the honourable Brahmin ladies who had accompanied their husbands who had joined Bharat's entourage when the latter went to meet Lord Ram at Chitrakoot in the forest—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 247.

In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 69, her mother-in-law Kaushalya too has blessed her in a similar way.]

चौ०. पारबती सम पतिप्रिय होहू । देबि न हम पर छाड़ब छोहू ॥ १ ॥
 पुनि पुनि बिनय करिअ कर जोरी । जौं एहि मारग फिरिअ बहोरी ॥ २ ॥
 दरसन देब जानि निज दासी । लखीं सीयँ सब प्रेम पिआसी ॥ ३ ॥
 मधुर बचन कहि कहि परितोषीं । जनु कुमुदिनीं कौमुदीं पोषीं ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

pārabatī sama patipriya hōhū. dēbi na hama para chāṛaba chōhū. 1.
 puni puni binaya kari'a kara jōrī. jaur̃ ēhi māraga phiri'a bahōrī. 2.
 darasanu dēba jāni nija dāsī. lakhīm̃ sīyam̃ saba prēma pi'āsī. 3.
 madhura bacana kahi kahi paritōṣīm̃. janu kumudinīm̃ kaumudinīm̃ pōṣīm̃. 4.

They said further: 'Let thee be as dear to thy husband as Parvati is to hers (i.e. to Lord Shiva). Oh goddess (dēbi)¹! Never diminish thy affection and grace upon us. [To wit, let this bond of affection that has developed between us be permanent, and whenever we shall be fortunate to meet again, please remember us and show thy kindness upon we humble people.] (1)

We most humbly join our palms and repeatedly request thee that in case thy return home by this path, --- (2)

--- Then please be gracious to come here and offer us an opportunity to see thine honourable self once again by remembering that all of us art thine humble maids (who are devoted to thee, and wouldst feel exceptionally grateful if we get another chance to serve thee).'

When Sita heard these polite words of the women folk and realized that were overcome with great affection and reverence for her, --- (3)

--- She comforted each one of them by speaking sweetly and affectionately with them.

Sita's polite and affectionate interaction with them granted immense satisfaction and happiness to these humble women folk of the surrounding villages, who felt as glad as the lily flower that would feel refreshed and rejuvenated when the soft and soothing moonlight falls upon it². (4)

[Note—¹The term “dēbi” or goddess used here is a sort of address used for a noble lady in a reverential manner.

²The lily flower opens its petals wide when the full moon shines upon it, indicating its joy on being caressed by the soft light of the moon's rays. Similarly, the humble women folk of the countryside were exhilarated when Sita talked with them politely and at a personal level.]

तबहिं लखन रघुबर रुख जानी । पूँछेउ मगु लोगन्हि मृदु बानी ॥ ५ ॥
 सुनत नारि नर भए दुखारी । पुलकित गात बिलोचन बारी ॥ ६ ॥
 मिटा मोदु मन भए मलीने । बिधि निधि दीन्ह लेत जनु छीने ॥ ७ ॥
 समुझि करम गति धीरजु कीन्हा । सोधि सुगम मगु तिन्ह कहि दीन्हा ॥ ८ ॥

tabahim lakhana raghubara rukha jānī. pūm'chē'u magu lōganhi mṛdu bānī. 5.
 sunata nāri nara bha'ē dukhārī. pulakita gāta bilōcana bārī. 6.
 miṭā mōdu mana bha'ē malīnē. bidhi nidhi dīnha lēta janu chīnē. 7.
 samujhi karama gati dhīraju kīnhā. sōdhi sugama magu tinha kahi dīnhā. 8.

[Finally, the time came to move on. So—] When Laxman became aware of Lord Ram's wish to move on, he politely asked the people the path they should take. (5)

No sooner the men and the women learnt of the Lord's desire to depart, but they felt exceedingly sad and despondent; their bodies were thrilled and tears welled up in their eyes (at the prospect of separation from these friendly and lovable visitors who had, by now, won over their hearts). (6)

What a moment ago was a feeling of joy and happiness, suddenly transformed into that of sadness, grief and despondency—as if the Creator was snatching away a treasury that was being made available to them¹. (7)

But somehow these people managed to overcome their grief by showing patience and restraining their emotions when they realized the practical limitations and difficulties of life that is governed by the dictates of Destiny, the fiat of Fate, and the provisions of Providence which cannot be avoided². (8)

[Note—¹In Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 117 herein above we have read that the country folks were as excited, joyous and happy with their interaction with Lord Ram, Laxman and Sita as if paupers have been given free access to a royal treasury. But even before they could have enough of this joy, Laxman told them that they would now have to move on to their next destination, asking the people the path they should take. It came as a strike of thunderbolt for the mesmerized people who suddenly became gloomy and remorseful at the prospect of having their joy cut short at so short a notice.

Hence, what a moment ago was a place full of pleasant talk and friendly chatter suddenly became silent and gloomy.

²These humble villagers realized that after all these three visitors were travellers, and therefore they are bound to move on to their destination. They can't stay with the villagers beyond a reasonable time. This verse also has a deep meaning—that after

every good day there is bound to be a dark night, that 'change' is the order in this world, and that everything, whether good or bad, would keep turning like an endless turn of the wheel. Therefore, a wise person must show patience, resilience, neutrality and dispassion while dealing with the countless shades of emotions and sentiments that emerge in his or her heart during the course of life, in order to remain calm and peaceful, and not be disturbed by circumstances.]

दो०. लखन जानकी सहित तब गवनु कीन्ह रघुनाथ ।
फेरे सब प्रिय बचन कहि लिए लाइ मन साथ ॥ ११८ ॥

dōhā.

lakhana jānakī sahita taba gavanu kīnha raghunātha.
phērē saba priya bacana kahi li'ē lā'i mana sātha. 118.

Then Lord Ram, accompanied by Laxman and Sita (Janki) departed from there for their onwards journey.

Meanwhile, though everyone wanted to accompany the Lord, but he persuaded them to return back by speaking to them very affectionately and politely. And though these humble villagers turned back, yet they sent their Mana (i.e. their hearts and minds; their emotions and thoughts) with Lord Ram¹. (Doha no. 118)

[Note—¹To wit, though on the insistence of Lord Ram the humble villagers were compelled to turn back, yet they symbolically accompanied Lord Ram by constantly thinking of the Lord and his companions at all times of their lives. These humble people would sit alone or huddle together in groups to talk about Lord Ram and his companions as they would be walking on the path to the distant forest—what they would be eating, where they would be resting, how far had they gone, are they safe, are they happy, have they decided on a place to stay or are they still moving on, and so on and so forth. This was a topic of common discussion amongst the villagers as will be clear in Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 119—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 122 that follow herein below.

Meanwhile, if some visitor or traveller happened to come from the direction in which the Lord had gone, all the villagers would accost him to find out if he has met Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman, and what news he can give about them.

In short, the villagers lived in their native places at the physical plane of existence of their bodies, but at the mental, emotional, sentimental and spiritual plane they were living where Lord Ram lived.

In this context, refer to: (a) Geetawali Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, verse nos. 35-42; and (b) Kavitaawali Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, verse nos. 24-25.]

चौ०. फिरत नारि नर अति पछिताहीं । दैअहि दोषु देहिं मन माहीं ॥ १ ॥
सहित बिषाद परसपर कहहीं । बिधि करतब उलटे सब अहहीं ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

phirata nāri nara ati pachitāhīm. dai'ahi dōṣu dēhīm mana māhīm. 1.
sahita biṣāda parasapara kahahīm. bidhi karataba ulaṭē saba ahahīm. 2.

While the villagers, the men and the women, were returning home, they were overcome with remorse, grief and regret. They lamented a lot at the cruelty of fate and dolefully blamed the Creator in their hearts for all the misfortunes that had befallen upon Lord Ram and his companions. (1)

Talking amongst themselves and overwhelmed with pangs of pain and sadness, they said that the actions of the Creator are always incredulous, insensitive, ridden with malice, and the opposite of what one would expect to happen¹. (2)

[Note—¹Under normal circumstances, one would have expected that a prince would succeed his father and ascend the throne, with his wife becoming a queen. As such, they would lead a comfortable life. But on the contrary, it is found in the case of Lord Ram that they are suddenly cast out to the forest to suffer immense hardships and difficulties of a life in the wilderness to which they are not at all accustomed. Further, to exacerbate the matter, it was their parents who had done it.

This is the usual refrain we hear in our personal lives too—that often people would regret that all their efforts to be successful have come to a naught, all their endeavours have failed at the last moment, all positive signs of success have inexplicably turned on their heads to produce negative results, and for all the misfortunes and ill fates that have befallen on them, the people would usually blame the Creator, saying that the latter enjoys throwing a spanner in the wheel and finds sadistic pleasure in causing grief and frustration to one and all so that people would beg for mercy to him (Creator), offer their obeisance to him, thereby making him feel important and powerful.

We have earlier read the same kind of lamentations and a profound feeling of remorse and regret when people came to know that Lord Ram was being banished to the forest for no fault of his, and all put the blame squarely on the Creator for this sudden misfortune that befell upon everyone—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 46 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 48; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 49; (citizens of Ayodhya); (iv) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 58 (Sita); (v) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 84 (citizens of Ayodhya); (vi) Chanda line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 201 (Nishad comforts Bharat by blaming all the evil turn of things on the Creator, to his malice and jealous nature that creates unnecessary difficulties for all); (vii) Chanda line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 276 (when the people were distressed upon seeing the distraught and remorseful condition of king Janak when he arrived at Chitrakoot a little later after Bharat's arrival in order to sort out the matter and try to persuade Lord Ram to return to Ayodhya).

The funny and whimsical behaviour of the Creator that results unexplainable things happening in this world has also been reiterated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chanda line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 96; and (ii) Chanda line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 97 (in the context of the irony of Parvati being destined to marry Shiva, an ascetic who has renounced all attachments to the world).

Refer also to: Kavitawali Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, verse nos. 18-20.]

निपट निरंकुस निठुर निसंकू । जेहिं ससि कीन्ह सरुज सकलंकू ॥ ३ ॥
रूख कलपतरु सागरु खारा । तेहिं पठए बन राजकुमारा ॥ ४ ॥

nipaṭa niraṅkusa niṭhura nisaṅkū. jēhiṁ sasi kīnha saruja sakalaṅkū. 3.
rūkha kalapataru sāgaru khārā. tēhiṁ paṭha'ē bana rājakumārā. 4.

[Continuing to show their anger at the Creator, the village folks lamented that—]

He (the Creator) feels that he is independent, sovereign, and would have his way, with no one to challenge or oppose him or his decisions, which attitude makes him have no remorse, and become very stubborn, reckless, heartless and cruel¹. It is he who has made the Moon diseased (even though the Moon possesses a pitcher of Amrit, the nectar of eternity and a miracle potion for all diseases, because it wanes and waxes like a chronic disease that comes and goes but never leaves the patient permanently to make his healthy), as well as ugly and disfigured (because though its disc is silvery white yet it has so many dark patches, and it also does not have the radiance and the splendour that its peer, the Sun, has). (3)

Look at other instances of the incongruous behaviour of the Creator. He has made the ocean, a huge reservoir of water, salty and corrosive (resulting in a chronic shortage of drinking sweet water on earth, which would never have happened if the water of the ocean was sweet and drinkable).

He has also caused the eternally green tree known as the Kalpa Tree undergo transmutation to become ordinary trees that wither away and are reduced to dry stumps.

[To wit, had the Creator not tampered with Nature and left it to its own ways, the earth would be a vast field of verdant greenery, and not with vast tracts of barren, dry and inhospitable land.]

Verily indeed, in all sooth, and without gainsay, it is nothing but this malignant nature of the Creator, who is full of malice and crookedness, that has made it so happen that these two princes and the princess who accompanies them are forced to come to the forest². (4)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 137 where Narad has made a similar angry comment for Lord Vishnu.

²Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 50 (when ladies close to Kaikeyi had tried to prevail upon her not to insist in sending Lord Ram to the forest); (ii) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 110 (where we read that the women and men who met Lord Ram on his way to the forest and came to know why he, Sita and Laxman have come there, regretted a lot).]

जौं पै इन्हि दीन्ह बनबासू । कीन्ह बादि बिधि भोग बिलासू ॥ ५ ॥
ए बिचरहिं मग बिनु पदत्राना । रचे बादि बिधि बाहन नाना ॥ ६ ॥

jaum̐ pai inhahi dīnha banabāsū. kīnha bādi bidhi bhōga bilāsū. 5.
ē bicarahim̐ maga binu padatrānā. racē bādi bidhi bāhana nānā. 6.

[Feeling remorseful and dolefully lamenting at the cruelty of Fate, Destiny and Providence which are all ruled by the Creator, the humble folks regretted—]

‘Surely and without doubt, the Creator who has sent them (Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman) to the forest, has indeed wasted his time and energy and skill in creating so many instruments of comfort and pleasure in this world¹. (5)

It is such an irony that they (Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman) are walking barefoot on rough and hard ground, while it is said that the Creator made so many vehicles to carry people from one point to another in a comfortable manner. (6)

[Note—¹To wit, on the one hand the Creator was concerned that his creation and its inhabitants should not suffer discomfort for lack of things that give comfort and pleasure, and on the other hand he chose to deprive these three noble souls of all comforts and pleasures for which he planned so many things and wasted his time in creating them. Say, what was the necessity for unnecessarily creating a paradoxical situation where two opposite things are seen simultaneously?

It is incongruous that the Creator would seem to be so kind, graceful and considerate in worrying about the comforts and pleasures of his creatures, yet act in such an opposite and cruel way by subjecting Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman to immense hardships and sufferings in the forest. Say, where was Creator’s compassion and his merciful nature gone when he maneuvered things in such a heartless way as to force Lord Ram and his two companions to go to the forest?

²Similarly, the Creator pretended to care for his creation by providing easy means of transport in the form of so many different kinds of vehicles, but when looked from up close it is evident that he was merely trying to get false praise for being magnanimous and charitable, for actually he is very stone-hearted and merciless, for had he been genuinely concerned about the comfort of his creatures, then why would he force Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman to walk on hard ground for long distances inspite of the fact that the same journey could have been easily undertaken on some kind of vehicle?]

ए महि परहिं डसि कुस पाता । सुभग सेज कत सृजत बिधाता ॥ ७ ॥

तरुबर बास इन्हि बिधि दीन्हा । धवल धाम रचि रचि श्रमु कीन्हा ॥ ८ ॥

ē mahi parahim̐ ḍasi kusa pātā. subhaga sēja kata srjata bidhātā. 7.
tarubara bāsa inhahi bidhi dīnhā. dhavala dhāma raci raci śramu kīnhā. 8.

They (Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman) lie down on hard and rough ground by spreading leaves and grass on it to make a coarse mat for themselves, then say why did the Creator create so many varieties of cushions, beds, mattresses and other things for sitting and reclining¹? (7)

Verily indeed and forsooth, on the one hand the Creator has forced them (Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman) to take shelter under shade of trees, then say has he (the Creator) not wasted his time and energy in creating magnificent buildings and homes for those who inhabit his creation?² (8)

[Note—¹The Creator shouldn't have bothered himself in making so many formats of sitting materials in this world when he had no second thoughts or compunctions in forcing these innocent noble souls to sit and sleep on rough ground by spreading leaves and grass to make a coarse mat for themselves.

²Highlighting another irony and paradox of creation, these villagers lament that there was no need for the Creator to create large homes and magnificent palaces to provide accommodation for all, when he could not tolerate even three persons living peacefully inside one such building.]

दो०. जौं ए मुनि पट धर जटिल सुंदर सुठि सुकुमार ।
बिबिध भाँति भूषन बसन बादि किए करतार ॥ ११९ ॥

dōhā.

jauṁ ē muni paṭa dhara jaṭila sundara suṭhi sukumāra.
bibidha bhāṁti bhūṣana basana bādi ki'ē karatāra. 119.

[The villagers lamented by citing another example.]

‘On the one hand these three noble souls (Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman), who are by nature tender and handsome, are made to dress like hermits, then all the ornaments and costumes that the Creator designed are useless; all his skills and efforts have gone in vain.’ (Doha no. 119)

चौ०. जौं ए कंद मूल फल खाहीं । बादि सुधादि असन जग माहीं ॥ १ ॥
एक कहहिं ए सहज सुहाए । आपु प्रगट भए बिधि न बनाए ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

jauṁ ē kanda mūla phala khāhīm. bādi sudhādi asana jaga māhīm. 1.
ēka kahahīm ē sahaja suhā'ē. āpu pragaṭa bha'ē bidhi na banā'ē. 2.

[The villagers were very sad at the fate which Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman had to face due to heartless nature of the Creator, for they blamed the Lord's misfortune on the latter.]

One of the villagers said: ‘Why, if they (Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman) are made to eat raw (edible) stems and roots as well as fruits, then what was the need (for the Creator) to create so many sweet dishes and delicious viands that are as tasty and pleasing as nectar?’¹ (1)

Hearing what his companions have said, one amongst them put forward his own views regarding the situation, saying: ‘They (Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman) are inherently so charming, are so profoundly attractive, and have a divine aura and magnetic appeal around themselves that it is obvious that they are not created by the Creator (because the Creator lacks the skill to create someone as heavenly as they are). So therefore, they are ‘self-born’, and not a product of Creator’s hands². (2)

[Note—¹The fruits, roots and stems were the only things that were available for Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman to eat during their sojourn in the forest. It was a far cry from the delicious meals that they ate in the royal palace. Hence, these humble villagers regret that what was the need for the Creator to give birth to expert cooks and countless varieties of things to eat when he would compel Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman to eat uncooked and rough food that was available in the forest?

²This view, that they were not created by the Creator but were ‘self-born’, is clear when we read Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 152; and (ii) Chanda line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 192.]

जहँ लगि बेद कही बिधि करनी । श्रवन नयन मन गोचर बरनी ॥ ३ ॥
देखहु खोजि भुअन दस चारी । कहँ अस पुरुष कहाँ असि नारी ॥ ४ ॥

jaham̐ lagi bēda kahī bidhi karanī. śravana nayana mana gōcara baranī. 3.
dēkhahu khōji bhu'ana dasa cārī. kaham̐ asa puruṣa kahām̐ asi nārī. 4.

The entire range of Creator’s creation as described by the Vedas (ancient scriptures that are repository of all knowledge), and as perceived by ears, eyes and mind of the wisest and most knowledgeable of persons --- (3)

--- Well, let anyone search the entire gamut of creation, both at a subtle level as well as at the gross level of existence, but surely and certainly where can one find such men and woman as they are (a reference to Lord Ram and Laxman, as well as to Sita)?¹ [To wit, no one can ever stand any match to Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman by any count; the three were one of their kinds in this creation.] (4)

[Note—¹Refer also to: (a) Kavitawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 16; (b) Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse nos. 105-106; (c) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 220—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 221; (ii) Doha no. 242 along with Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 247; (iv) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 264; (v) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 265; (vi) Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precede Doha no. 317; (vii) Chanda line nos. 3-4 that precedes Doha no. 319; (viii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 323; (ix) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 325; and (x) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 343.]

इन्हि देखि बिधि मनु अनुरागा । पटतर जोग बनावै लागा ॥ ५ ॥

कीन्ह बहुत श्रम ऐक न आए । तेहिं इरिषा बन आनि दुराए ॥ ६ ॥

inhahi dēkhi bidhi manu anurāgā. paṭatara jōga banāvai lāgā. 5.
kīnha bahuta śrama aika na ā'ē. tēhiṁ iriṣā bana āni durā'ē. 6.

When the Creator saw them, he was so mesmerized by their bewitching charm that he wished to create someone like them, in their image, and started work on this project. (5)

But no matter how hard he (the Creator) tried and how best he used his creative skills, yet he failed miserably to copy them. Out of frustration then, and overcome with a sense of jealousy, he decided to tweak with their fate by forcing them to come to the forest (to make them suffer, as a means of venting his ire of jealousy on them).¹ (6)

[Note—¹This is the reason why, according to these innocent and unlettered country folks, Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman were sent to exile in the forest—because the Creator became jealous. Being full of envy and malice with them, and in order to vent his frustration and anger at them for putting to shame the master craftsman of this magnificent and beautiful creation, i.e. the Creator, for having failed to even make a copy of the three, the Creator wanted to punish them, and since he had the authority and the power over destiny and fate, he misused them and maneuvered things in such a way that they, i.e. Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman, would go to the forest to suffer.

Up till this point we have been reading that the Creator had sent Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman to the forest because his ways are whimsical and contrary to what one would expect to happen in a routine way that fits in well with natural progression of things in a logical way and in accordance with rational behaviour. But now another angle or dimension is added to this view, to the reason why Lord Ram and his companions were sent to the forest—it is because the Creator was jealous of them, for he failed to make a copy like them, and out of malice, envy and frustration he went out of his way to break the laws that govern this creation, which works like clockwork and according to set principles, by misusing his authority and powers to tweak fate, providence and destiny so that they would have to suffer hardships in the forest.]

एक कहहिं हम बहुत न जानहिं । आपुहि परम धन्य करि मानहिं ॥ ७ ॥

ते पुनि पुन्यपुंज हम लेखे । जे देखहिं देखिहहिं जिन्ह देखे ॥ ८ ॥

ēka kahahiṁ hama bahuta na jānahiṁ. āpuhi parama dhan'ya kari mānahiṁ. 7.

tē puni pun'yapunja hama lēkhē. jē dēkhahiṁ dēkhihahiṁ jinha dēkhē. 8.

However, another person (who was intently but quietly listening to all this discussion and different views expressed by his peers) said: ‘We don’t know much (and neither do we wish to bother ourselves about who they are or how they were born) except to say that we consider ourselves most fortunate, privileged and blessed (that we were able to see them to our heart’s content)¹. (7)

Further, in our humble view, all those who have seen them till now, are seeing them at present, and would see them in the future too—all are equally most fortunate, privileged and blessed.’ (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 246 where a similar idea is expressed by wise princes and kings at the venue of Sita’s marriage at the time when many others had expressed diverse views regarding Lord Ram and Sita. In this context, refer also to: Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 241—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 242; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 244; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 310.

Refer also to: Geetawali Ramayan, (a) Baal Kand, verse no. 68, stanza no. 12; (b) Ayodhya Kand, verse no. 19, stanza no. 3.]

दो०. एहि बिधि कहि कहि बचन प्रिय लेहिं नयन भरि नीर ।
किमि चलिहहिं मारग अगम सुठि सुकुमार सरीर ॥ १२० ॥

dōhā.

ēhi bidhi kahi kahi bacana priya lēhiṁ nayana bhari nīra.
kimi calihahiṁ māraga agama suṭhi sukumāra sarīra. 120.

In this way, all those who saw them (i.e. Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman) spoke affectionately and with warmth about them even as tears welled up in their eyes due to grief at their fate as well as out of sympathy for them.

Overwhelmed with distress and sadness in their hearts, these villagers wondered how they (i.e. Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman) would walk (long distances) on hard ground even though they have a delicate constitution¹. (Doha no. 120)

[Note—¹This Doha can be read as follows also: “In this way, the villagers, with tears welling up in their eyes, lamented and were full of remorse as they wondered about the difficulties Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman would be facing on the path to the forest. Speaking softly amongst themselves, they rued pensively: ‘We wonder how they, who have such delicate frames, would manage to walk on the rough path of the forest?’ ”

Refer also to: Kavitaawali Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, verse nos. 18-19.]

चौ०. नारि सनेह बिकल बस होहीं । चकई साँझ समय जनु सोहीं ॥ १ ॥
मृदु पद कमल कठिन मगु जानी । गहबरी हृदयँ कहहिं बर बानी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

nāri sanēha bikala basa hōhīṁ. caka’īṁ sām̐jha samaya janu sōhīṁ. 1.
mṛḍu pada kamala kaṭhina magu jānī. gahabari hṛdayaṁ kahahiṁ bara bānī.
2.

The women folk amongst the villagers were moved by affection for them (i.e. for Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman) just like the Chakvi (the female ruddy goose) feels distraught, despondent and gloomy at the time when the sun sets¹. (1)

Considering the fact that the path consists of rough and hard ground, while the feet of these three travellers (Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman) were soft and tender like the petals of a lotus flower (and therefore unaccustomed to walk on such ground), these women folk became emotional and felt very sad in their hearts.

Stirred by grief, and driven by sympathy and empathy for the three travellers, they rued pensively and expressed their concerns with a soft voice as follows: --- (2)

[Note—¹The male and the female of this species of birds stay together during the day, but as night approaches they separate from one another. This makes the female bird sad and despondent at the gloomy prospect of separation from its partner.

Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman were now departing from the place where they were met by these villagers, and this news meant separation from the Lord, which prospect dismayed everyone, both the males and the females—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 118 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede it.

However, the women were more affected than their male counterparts, because women have a softer heart, and are inclined to be more emotional and become more sentimental than their male companions.]

परसत मृदुल चरन अरुनारे । सकुचति महि जिमि हृदय हमारे ॥ ३ ॥
जौं जगदीस इन्हहि बनू दीन्हा । कस न सुमनमय मारगु कीन्हा ॥ ४ ॥
जौं मागा पाइअ बिधि पाहीं । ए रखिअहिं सखि आँखिन्ह माहीं ॥ ५ ॥

parasata mṛdula carana arunārē. sakucati mahi jimi hṛdaya hamārē. 3.
jauṁ jagadīsa inhahi banu dīnhā. kasa na sumanamaya mārāgu kīnhā. 4.
jauṁ māgā pā'i'a bidhi pāhīm. ē rakhi'ahim sakhi āṁkhinha māhīm. 5.

‘When the earth touches the soft red soles of their feet it feels remorseful, guilty and self-conscious that it is so hard and rough, just like our own hearts are feeling now. The earth surely would like to shrink and become softer for them if she could have her way¹. (3)

If God (jagadīsa) wished to send them to the forest, why could he not at least make the earth soft like a bed of flowers (by spreading petals on the path)? (4)

Friends, if we could have our wishes fulfilled by asking for a boon, we certainly would ask the Creator (bidhi) to let the three travellers live inside our eyes².’ (5)

[Note—¹To wit, we believe that mother earth too feels the same way as we do. It is sure that she too feels the pain that we have in our hearts—that her natural hardness and roughness is causing much discomfort and distress to these delicate travellers who are compelled to tread on her surface. When Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman put their feet down on the earth, the latter would like to become either softer or shrink away so as not to feel hard to them when their feet touches her. But she regrets and laments that it is not possible for her to do so.

²The eye is a very sensitive organ. Even a small speck of dust hurts it. The idea expressed here is that if these humble folks had their way, and if God or the Creator would give them a chance to ask for a boon of their choice, they would demand that Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman be allowed to abide within their eyes—i.e. to walk on a ground which is as soft as the tissues of their eyes.]

जे नर नारि न अवसर आए । तिन्ह सिय रामु न देखन पाए ॥ ६ ॥
 सुनि सुरूपु बूझहिं अकुलाई । अब लगि गए कहाँ लगि भाई ॥ ७ ॥
 समरथ धाइ बिलोकहिं जाई । प्रमुदित फिरहिं जनमफलु पाई ॥ ८ ॥

jē nara nāri na avasara ā'ē. tinha siya rāmu na dēkhana pā'ē. 6.
 suni surūpu būjhahim akulā'ī. aba lagi ga'ē kahām' lagi bhā'ī. 7.
 samaratha dhā'i bilōkahim jā'ī. pramudita phirahim janamaphalu pā'ī. 8.

Those men and women who could not come on that occasion, they missed the chance to see Lord Ram and Sita (as well as Laxman). (6)

When however, they heard from their companions about their charm and beauty, they became agitated out of regret and their ill luck that they missed such a golden opportunity of a lifetime.

They anxiously asked their companions (who had met Lord Ram and were with him a while ago) about the Lord, and enquired from them as to how far the Lord and his companions would have gone by now. (7)

The able amongst them rushed ahead to overtake Lord Ram on the way in order to see him, and after deriving immense joy with this meeting they returned back, exhilarated and feeling blessed as if they had gotten a reward of a lifetime¹. (8)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 108; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 109.]

दो०. अबला बालक बृद्ध जन कर मीजहिं पछिताहिं ।
 होहिं प्रेमबस लोग इमि रामु जहाँ जहँ जाहिं ॥ १२१ ॥

dōhā.

abalā bālaka br̥d'dha jana kara mijahim pachitāhim.
 hōhim prēmabasa lōga imi rāmu jahām' jaham' jāhim. 121.

Ladies, children and old people—i.e. everyone, wrung their hands in regret while lamenting and feeling remorseful¹.

Verily indeed, in all sooth and without exception, wherever Lord Ram went, everyone was overcome with deep affection and profound love for him². (Doha no. 121)

[Note—¹The people sorely lamented and gravely grieved at the evil nature of Fate and the harshness of the Creator that compelled Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman to face the

hardships of forest for no fault of theirs. In this context, Guha Nishad's lamentations are very relevant. Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 90—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 92.

²To wit, Lord Ram had such an intrinsic magnetic appeal and a charming personality marked by divinity, holiness, purity and virtuousness of character that wherever he went he left an indelible impression on all those who beheld him. We have read about a similar situation earlier in Janakpur, where as soon as the news spread that Lord Ram and Laxman were coming for a visit to the city, everyone rushed out to see them. The children, as well as men and women folk of all age groups were bowled over by the charm of the two brothers.

In this context, refer also to Doha no. 123 and the note appended to it herein below.

Similarly, refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 219; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 220; (iii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 221; (iv) Doha no. 223; (v) Doha no. 224 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that follow it; (vi) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 240.]

चौ०. गावँ गावँ अस होइ अनंदू । देखि भानुकुल कैरव चंदू ॥ १ ॥

जे कछु समाचार सुनि पावहिं । ते नृप रानिहि दोसु लगावहिं ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

gāvam̐ gāvam̐ asa hō'i anandū. dēkhi bhānukula kairava candū. 1.

jē kachu samācāra suni pāvahim̐. tē nr̥pa rānihi dōsu lagāvahim̐. 2.

In all the villages falling on the way through which Lord Ram—who was a provider of joy to the Solar race as the moon is to the lily flower¹—passed by, there was widespread happiness and rejoicing amongst its residents when they saw the Lord, in a fashion that was similar to the one witnessed in the village near which he had just passed by. (1)

Whoever amongst them heard of the reason why the Lord had come to the forest, they would blame the king and the queen (Dasrath and Kaikeyi respectively) for banishing Lord Ram (and causing so much suffering to him)². (2)

[Note—¹The lily flower feels happy in the light of the full moon, and its joy is expressed in the opening of its petals. Lord Ram was born in the Solar race, and hence he gave immense joy and happiness to all the members of that race in the same way that the moon gives joy and happiness to the lily flowers.

The imagery is brilliant here: Just as a single moon in the sky grants joy to countless lily flowers on earth which bloom in its light, so did Lord Ram's presence alone was sufficient to grant immense happiness to countless villagers who rejoiced when they saw his divine form, for they felt the warmth of his affection and the aura of his presence made them feel exhilarated while rejuvenating their souls just like a person feels rejuvenated and energized in the light of the sun.

²Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 47 (citizens of Ayodhya blame Kaikeyi); (ii) Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 48 (citizens of Ayodhya blame Dasrath); (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 89 (villagers of Sringeripur); (iv) Doha no. 91 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that follow it (Guha Nishad blames Kaikeyi); (v) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 110 (villagers in the vicinity of river Yamuna after Lord Ram had crossed it).

The present verse expresses the general sentiment of resentment and regret that prevailed amongst all those who met Lord Ram and came to know of the primary reason why he had come to the forest on foot, with his young wife (Sita) and brother (Laxman). Though those who met the Lord felt exceptionally happy, yet they lamented gravely at the unwarranted sufferings that the Lord was subjected to due to harshness and stern heartedness of his father Dasrath and step-mother Kaikeyi.]

कहहिं एक अति भल नरनाहू । दीन्ह हमहि जोड़ लोचन लाहू ॥ ३ ॥
कहहिं परसपर लोग लोगार्ह । बातें सरल सनेह सुहाई ॥ ४ ॥

kahahim ēka ati bhala naranāhū. dīnha hamahi jō'i lōcana lāhū. 3.
kahahim parasapara lōga lōgā'īm. bātēm sarala sanēha suhā'īm. 4.

[As in previous instances, while some blamed the king and the queen for sending Lord Ram to the forest, there were others who looked at the situation from a different, positive angle, for they thanked the king for giving them an opportunity of a lifetime to see the divine form of Lord Ram and get the reward of having eyesight.]

Some, on the other hand, praised the king (Dasrath), saying: 'The king has done a good thing (by sending Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman) to the forest, for this has given us a golden opportunity of a lifetime to see them and enjoy the benefit of having eyes (because it is the eye that enables us to see their magnificently charming form, and it is made possible because the king has Lord Ram and his companions to the forest)'¹. (3)

In this general way, the ladies and men of the countryside through which Lord Ram passed would talk pleasantly with each other in simple and affectionate way.

[To wit, the way the country folks reacted to Lord Ram's visit showed that they had developed immense love, sympathy, empathy and devotion for the Lord.] (4)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 89; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 114; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 120.]

ते पितु मातु धन्य जिन्ह जाए । धन्य सो नगरु जहाँ तें आए ॥ ५ ॥
धन्य सो देसु सैलु बन गाऊँ । जहँ जहँ जाहिं धन्य सोइ ठाऊँ ॥ ६ ॥

tē pitu mātu dhan'ya jinha jā'ē. dhan'ya sō nagaru jahām' tēm ā'ē. 5.
dhan'ya sō dēsu sailu bana gā'ūm'. jaham' jaham' jāhim dhan'ya sō'i ṭhā'ūm'. 6.

They further praised the parents of the Lord and the city from whence he had come, saying: 'Glory and praise to the parents who have given them birth, and glory and praise to the city from whence they have come'¹. (5)

Glory and praise to the country whither they are going, as well as to all the mountains, the forests and the villages that fall en-route. Nay, every single place on earth where they would set their foot on is worthy of immense praise and glory². (6)

[Note—¹In this context, refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 16.

²Refer also to: (a) Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 113 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it; (b) Geetawali Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, verse no. 32.]

सुखु पायउ बिरंचि रचि तेही । ए जेहि के सब भाँति सनेही ॥ ७ ॥
राम लखन पथि कथा सुहाई । रही सकल मग कानन छाई ॥ ८ ॥

sukhu pāya'u biran'ci raci tēhī. ē jēhi kē saba bhām'ti sanēhī. 7.
rāma lakhana pathi kathā suhā'ī. rahī sakala maga kānana chā'ī. 8.

The Creator feels happy by creating those creatures to whom they (Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman) are dear¹. (7)

In this way, the pleasant story of Lord Ram and Laxman as travellers on the path to the forest spread far and wide throughout the realm, in the villages and the forests beyond (where hermits, ascetics and other lived)². (8)

[Note—¹To wit, in this vast creation, only those who feel joyous and blessed by the company of Lord Ram are indeed very lucky and blessed, and the Creator himself feels glad that he created such creatures. But those who have no affection for Lord Ram, those who have no devotion for the Lord, who are not moved by emotions at the thought of the Lord, verily indeed such creatures are nothing but a burden on earth, and are no better than worthless scum that accumulates on the surface of stagnant water.

In this context, refer to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 16; (b) Ayodhya Kand, (ii) Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 74.

In Tulsidas' stellar book of prayers, called 'Vinai Patrika', there are certain verses that specifically deal with the misfortune of those people who do not have affection for Lord Ram—apropos: Vinai Patrika, verse nos. 174-175.

²The fame and glory of Lord Ram, his magnificent charm and magnetic appeal, his intrinsic divinity and holy aura, et al, spread far and wide like the light of the sun that heralds its arrival even before it actually rises in the eastern sky. This glory of the

Lord was, of course, carried ahead by word-of-mouth by travellers who met Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman, as well as by villagers who would convey the magnificent news to their fellow villagers and peers as and when the opportunity arose during the course of routine affairs of life.]

दो०. एहि बिधि रघुकुल कमल रबि मग लोगन्ह सुख देत ।
जाहिं चले देखत बिपिन सिय सौमित्रि समेत ॥ १२२ ॥

dōhā.

ēhi bidhi raghukula kamala rabi maga lōganha sukha dēta.
jāhim calē dēkhata bipina siya saumitri samēta. 122.

In this way, Lord Ram who was like a sun with respect to the race of illustrious kings belonging to the family of king Raghu that was like the lotus flower¹, went ahead on his journey along with Sita and Laxman, while enjoying the pleasant scenery of the forest (and the countryside). (Doha no. 122)

[Note—¹In this metaphoric comparison, Lord Ram is the ‘sun’, while the family of king Raghu is the ‘lotus flower’. Even as the sun gives joy to the lotus which is expressed by the latter by opening up its petals during the daytime when the sun shines, the family of king Raghu too derives its glory and fame because Lord Ram was a member of this great race.

Further, since the line of kings descending from king Raghu is also known as the ‘Solar Race’, this likeness of Lord Ram with the ‘sun’ is very apt.]

चौ०. आगें रामु लखनु बने पाछें । तापस बेष बिराजत काछें ॥ १ ॥
उभय बीच सिय सोहति कैसैं । ब्रह्म जीव बिच माया जैसैं ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

āgērṁ rāmu lakhanu banē pāchēm. tāpasa bēṣa birājata kāchēm. 1.
ubhaya bīca siya sōhati kaisēm. brahma jīva bica māyā jaisēm. 2.

[The following verses describe how Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman walked in a noble and dignified manner on the path to the forest. Refer also to: (a) Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 7; (b) Geetawali Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, verse nos. 28 (stanza no. 3) and 31 (stanza no. 2); and (c) Kavitawali Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, verse no. 15.]

Lord Ram leads from the front, and Laxman follows from the rear. They looked magnificent and majestic in the attire of hermits. (1)

Walking between them (Lord Ram and Laxman) is Sita who resembles ‘Maya’ (a radiant source of cosmic energy that is also responsible for creating the smokescreen of delusions in this world) that stands between Brahm (the Supreme Being representing cosmic Consciousness at the macrocosmic level of creation) on the one

hand, and the Jiva (the individual creature, the living being who represents a fraction of this Consciousness at the microcosmic level of creation) on the other hand¹. (2)

[Note—¹This verse draws a parallel from the philosophy of the Upanishads which say, inter alia, that it is Maya that separates the individual Jiva from Brahm. Brahm, the Supreme Being and the cosmic Consciousness does nothing himself, but it is Brahm's cosmic power and energy known as Maya that actually does what Brahm wants to be done; Maya acts on the instructions of Brahm and carries out the latter's wishes.

The esoteric concept of Maya and its relationship with both Brahm and Jiva, how to overcome the effects of Maya (worldly delusions), and the importance of Bhakti (devotion) in this context, has been elaborated dealt with from different angles later on in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Doha no. 41; (ii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 43—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 45; (iii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 70—to Doha no. 73; (iv) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 86—to Doha no. 86; and (v) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 116—to Doha no. 118.]

बहुरि कहउँ छबि जसि मन बसई । जनु मधु मदन मध्य रति लसई ॥ ३ ॥
उपमा बहुरि कहउँ जियँ जोही । जनु बुध बिधु बिच रोहिनि सोही ॥ ४ ॥

bahuri kaha'um' chabi jasi mana basaĩ. janu madhu madana madhya rati lasaĩ. 3.

upamā bahuri kaha'um' jiyam' jōhī. janu budha bidhu bica rōhini sōhī. 4.

Tulsidas says: 'Now, from the perspective of a poet, I shall give another version of this beautiful sight as it is imprinted in my subtle heart and the sub-conscious mind (collectively known as the 'Mana').

The impression this magnificent sight (as narrated in verse nos. 1-2 herein above, with Sita walking between Lord Ram, who walks in the front, and Laxman, who follows them from the rear) gives to me is that of the charming presence of Rati between Kamdeo and the season when honey drips from flowers (a reference to the Spring season)¹. (3)

I search my mind and find another example to describe this scene. It is like Rohini (representing Sita) being present between the Moon (Lord Ram) and the planet Mercury (Laxman)². (4)

[Note—¹Kamdeo is the patron god of beauty and charm; Rati is his consort; and the Spring season is when one rejoices the onset of greenery and blossoming of flowers all around, and it is this season when passions are high after the dull phase of winter.

In this imagery, Sita is like 'Rati'; Lord Ram is like 'Kamdeo', Rati's husband; and Laxman is the spring season because his presence gives a lot of happiness to both Lord Ram and Sita.

²In this imagery, Sita is likened to 'Rohini'; Lord Ram to the 'Moon'; and Laxman to the planet 'Mercury'.

According to Purans, Rohini is the consort of the Moon God; she has a fair complexion, while the Moon has a little shade of darkness on its disc. The deity representing the planet Mercury is known as Buddha; it is said to be an off-spring of the Moon God, and has a glowing, yellowish complexion.

Laxman's mother Sumitra had explicitly advised her son to treat Lord Ram as his father, and Sita as his mother—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 74.

Hence, this comparison of Laxman to Mercury, which is said to the son of the Moon God and his consort Rohini fits in well.

Lord Ram has a dark complexion, hence he is like the Moon God. Sita has a fair complexion and is the wife of Lord Ram, hence she is like Rohini. And Laxman has a glowing complexion like that of gold, and he treats Lord Ram as his father and Sita his mother, hence he is like Mercury.]

प्रभु पद रेख बीच बिच सीता । धरति चरन मग चलति सभिता ॥ ५ ॥

सीय राम पद अंक बराएँ । लखन चलहिं मगु दाहिन लाएँ ॥ ६ ॥

prabhu pada rēkha bīca bica sītā. dharati carana maga calati sabhitā. 5.
sīya rāma pada aṅka barā'ēm̃. lakhana calahiṁ magu dāhina lā'ēm̃. 6.

[In these two verses we read exactly how Sita and Laxman were mindful of the way they walked behind Lord Ram on the dusty road to the forest. They were very careful not to put their feet on the ground where Lord Ram had placed his—because if Sita or Laxman put their feet where Lord Ram's feet have made their mark, the 'footprint', on the dust on the ground, it would be insulting for the Lord, for it would be tantamount to stepping on the Lord's feet itself. So therefore, both Sita and Laxman avoided stepping on the footprints of Lord Ram made on the dust on the ground. In this context, refer to Geetawali Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, verse no. 32.]

While walking, Sita is very careful where she places her feet on the ground, for she puts them between the footprints made by Lord Ram's feet on the dust, and she ensures that they do not overlap those of the Lord's (as it would be tantamount to causing an insult to the Lord by stepping on his feet).

This extra care and due diligence on the part of Sita (regarding where to put her feet on the ground as she walks behind Lord Ram) gives the impression that she is shy and scared while walking on foot to the forest. (5)

Meanwhile, Laxman kept the footprints of both Lord Ram and Sita to his right as he walked behind them (in order not to step on either of them)¹. (6)

[Note—¹A question arises here: the path of the forest must have had so many thorns, stones and other sharp things that would naturally hurt anyone walking on such a rough ground. So, were the three travellers, Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman, too suffered from this natural phenomenon?

The astonishing answer is this: Sita and Laxman were not pricked or hurt by the stones, all the injury that they caused as a consequence of their natural habit or character was accepted by Lord Ram himself. To wit, Lord Ram's feet were pricked by sharp thorns, but neither Sita nor Laxman suffered any such thing. To ensure that

they are not harmed, Lord Ram took the lead and walked ahead of them, to clear the path for them, and to monitor the situation and take stock of any danger before allowing Sita and Laxman to move ahead. This is why Sita and Laxman were told to follow the Lord from behind.

An elaborate discussion in this connection has been appended in our narrative later on, as a note appended to Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 141.

Meanwhile, presently we find that while walking on the forest path, Lord Ram took the lead and walked ahead of Sita and Laxman, both of whom followed from behind. We also read that both Sita and Laxman avoided the footprints made by Lord Ram's feet on the dust on the path, walking in such a way that they never stepped on those footprints.

Well, can one imagine why this happened? Yes, the answer is easy in the context of the observations made above. Lord Ram walked in the front, ahead of Sita and Laxman, to ensure that the path is clear and there is no danger for his devotees, Sita and Laxman, who were following him from behind. If Lord Ram got the wind that there was some danger ahead, the Lord would either tackle it quietly himself, or would Sita and Laxman be ready, at which warning Laxman would take guard from behind and Lord Ram from the front as they moved ahead, eliminating or brushing aside all dangers as they progressed.

Further, Lord Ram would invite the thorns and stones on the way to prick and hurt his feet if they so desire, it won't matter to him at all, but warned them to clear the path and move aside so that Sita and Laxman could pass through unharmed. The Lord told them that they are allowed to act in accordance with the characters that Nature has assigned to them as part of the wider picture of creation in which every single entity has its unique character, some good and some bad, and every entity has the equal right to exist. In the case of the thorn and the stone, this character was to prick and hurt, so they can go ahead with it; it is okay. But the Lord warned them that they should do whatever they pleased with him, for he is the Supreme Father of this creation and does not mind mischief created by one or two of his own off-springs, but they should not harm Sita and Laxman, as it would be tantamount to hurting the Lord's devotees, and this offense is unforgivable. Should the thorns and the stones dare to hurt either Sita or Laxman, the Lord warned their patron deities, he would exterminate them from the surface of earth.

That is why Sita and Laxman did not suffer from thorns pricking the soles of their feet, but thorns did stick in Lord Ram's feet. This is evident when the Vedas clearly point out that this happened Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chanda line no. 15 that precedes Doha no. 13.

This nature of Lord Ram, that he does not mind if any mischief is caused to him, but he cannot tolerate any harm done to his devotee in any manner is affirmed by the Guru (the moral guide and preceptor) of the Gods in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 218.]

राम लखन सिय प्रीति सुहाई । बचन अगोचर किमि कहि जाई ॥ ७ ॥

खग मृग मगन देखि छबि होहीं । लिए चोरि चित राम बटोहीं ॥ ८ ॥

rāma lakhana siya prīti suhā'ī. bacana agōcara kimi kahi jā'ī. 7.
khaga mṛga magana dēkhi chabi hōhīm. li'ē cōri cita rāma baṭōhīm. 8.

The bond of mutual love and affection that existed between Lord Ram, Laxman and Sita was so ideal, so deep and so divine that it is beyond the perception of senses, and therefore how is it possible to describe it in words? (7)

The birds and animals were mesmerized when they beheld the beautiful and fascinating sight of Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman in the form of travellers as they (slowly) wended their way on the path to the remote forest¹. (8)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Kavitawali Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, verse nos. 14, 17, 27.]

दो०. जिन्ह जिन्ह देखे पथिक प्रिय सिय समेत दोउ भाड़ ।
भव मगु अगमु अनंदु तेइ बिनु श्रम रहे सिराइ ॥ १२३ ॥

dōhā.

jinha jinha dēkhē pathika priya siya samēta dō'u bhā'i.
bhava magu agamu anandu tē'i binu śrama rahē sirā'i. 123.

Verily indeed, in all sooth and without gainsay, all those (men, women, animals, birds etc.) who saw the two brothers (Lord Ram and Laxman) along with Sita as affectionate travellers traversing on the path to the forest—all such creatures were immersed in joy and happiness because they found an easy way to cross the formidable ocean symbolizing this mortal world of transmigration (that is marked with misery, grief and pain) to attain eternal bliss, beatitude and felicity for themselves¹. (Doha no. 123)

[Note—¹To wit, wherever Lord Ram went, the people were enchanted by his intrinsic heavenly charm and the aura of divinity that effused from him, by the purity of his heart and the holiness of his presence, by his affable and courteous nature, his bewitching smile and the affectionate way he interacted by one and all, irrespective of who they were. The Lord bowled everyone over by his lovable and obliging nature so much so that he left behind him an indelible mark on everyone's sub-conscious and heart.

All those who came in contact with the Lord were enthralled and captivated by his divine and holy presence, all became emotionally attached to him, and while he was with them they thoroughly enjoyed his auspicious company, and when he left them to go on ahead with his journey they were distraught and felt very sad, but they cherished his memory for the rest of their lives, deriving immense peace, joy and bliss by remembering him. Since the aim of all endeavours a person makes in this world is to have peace and happiness, and since the pleasant memory of Lord Ram gave a natural sense of joy and bliss to all those whom the Lord met, it is but natural and obvious to expect that the common people would spontaneously spend as much time as they could in the Lord's remembrance even while they engaged themselves in the routine chores of humdrum life—for this remembrance made them sincerely happy and truly blissful.

The image of Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman in the habit of hermits, walking down the path cheerfully to their destination, showing courtesy and responding warmly to everyone who came forward to meet them and pay their obeisance to them, was so deeply touching that it mesmerized the people and got automatically etched in their subtle hearts. Forsooth, this image firmly entrenched itself in the sub-conscious mind and the thoughts of all people, of all ages, of all genders, and all vocations.]

चौ०. अजहुँ जासु उर सपनेहुँ काऊ । बसहुँ लखनु सिय रामु बटाऊ ॥ १ ॥
राम धाम पथ पाइहि सोई । जो पथ पाव कबहुँ मुनि कोई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

ajahum̐ jāsu ura sapanēhum̐ kā'ū. basahum̐ lakhanu siya rāmu baṭā'ū. 1.
rāma dhāma patha pā'ihī sō'ī. jō patha pāva kabahum̐ muni kō'ī. 2.

Verily indeed, in all sooth and without any gainsay, even today (i.e. even now, even till present time, even after a long time of it actually happening in the distant past) if the (heavenly charming, divine and holy) image of Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman travelling on the path attired in the habit of hermits is lodged (etched) in the (subtle) heart of anyone, and if one (closes his eyes and) can dream of it, --- (1)

--- Then surely and certainly, without a trace of doubt, such a person can find the road leading to the abode of Lord Ram¹, a path that even great sages and ascetics would rarely find². (2)

[Note—¹This essentially refers to the final destination of the soul. It refers to final liberation and deliverance from this gross mortal world of transmigration with all its associated problems and miseries; it refers to attainment of emancipation and salvation of the soul of the creature; it refers to attainment of eternal bliss, peace, beatitude and felicity; it refers to attainment of eternity and stability for the soul where it can rest in peace instead of being caught in a cycle of birth and death in this transient world.

In common parlance it refers to attainment of 'heaven', or the Vishnu Loka, where Lord Vishnu, the primary form of Lord Ram, lives. But from the perspective of metaphysics, spiritualism and the philosophy of the Upanishads, the 'abode' to which this verse refers to is an exalted state of Consciousness marked by an eternal existence of bliss and beatitude for the soul that is much superior to 'heaven' as the word is commonly understood to mean.

²A similar idea is reiterated in Geetawali Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, verse no. 30 (stanza no. 5).

At the end of the narration of this magnificent book called the 'Ram Charit Manas', we find a set of verses that mirror exactly this same idea, of an easy way by which the creature's soul can find its spiritual objective of attaining deliverance, emancipation, salvation, of finding eternal peace, tranquility, bliss, beatitude and felicity. Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-8 and Chanda line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 130.

This beautiful spiritual idea of remembering Lord Ram in the attire of a hermit as a means to attain final liberation and deliverance from the cycle of birth and death,

of attaining emancipation and salvation for the soul, of having eternal peace, bliss, beatitude and felicity, has been explicitly described at two other places in the story of Ram Charit Manas. One such instance is that of Jatau, a vulture, and the other instance is that of Baali, the ruler of the forest-and-hill kingdom of Kishkindha.

When Lord Ram, a manifested form of the supreme Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness in a personalized form, stood before Jatau and Baali at the time of their death, the Lord was attired in the habit of a hermit like the way he was when he met these humble villagers and all others en-route to the forest as well as when he was in the forest itself.

Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-7 and 11 that precede Doha no. 31 (Jatau); and (b) Kishkidha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 10 (Baali).

Jatau and Baali were not some great ascetic or hermit or sage who had done immense Tapa (austerity and penance) to qualify for such highly enlightened views about the destiny of a creature.

The idea is plain and simple: If one loves Lord Ram sincerely, if one is devoted to him without pretensions, if one wants nothing else but the Lord—then surely and certainly such a soul would find final deliverance from the world of transmigration to attain eternity and supreme bliss. Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 43—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 45.]

तब रघुबीर श्रमित सिय जानी । देखि निकट बटु सीतल पानी ॥ ३ ॥
तहँ बसि कंद मूल फल खाई । प्रात नहाइ चले रघुराई ॥ ४ ॥

taba raghubīra śramita siya jānī. dēkhi nikṭaṭa baṭu sītala pānī. 3.
tahaṁ basi kanda mūla phala khāī. prāta nahā'i calē raghurāī. 4.

Then (i.e. after walking some distance) Lord Ram (the brave Lord of Raghu's race; "raghubīra") observed (or realized) that Sita was feeling tired.

In order to give her some rest, the Lord looked here and there, and eventually descried a banyan tree and a water-body with cool water nearby¹. (3)

The Lord and his companions went to this place where they refreshed themselves by eating some edible roots and fruits, and retired for the night.

The next morning, Lord Ram (the Lord of king Raghu's race; "raghurāī") and his companions took a bath and departed from there for their onwards journey. (4)

[Note—¹We read two verses in Geetawali Ramayan that describe a similar incident—refer to: Geetawali Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, verse nos. 13-14.

The only difference in the two narratives is that while in Geetawali Ramayan this incident is described at a time when Lord Ram had left Ayodhya a little while ago and was not far away on his journey to the distant forest, while in our present narrative of Ram Charit Manas it refers to a time much later when the Lord had already progressed quite a distance from Ayodhya, and was nearing sage Valmiki's hermitage in the forest—see verse no. 5 that follows herein below.]

देखत बन सर सैल सुहाए । बालमीकि आश्रम प्रभु आए ॥ ५ ॥
 राम दीख मुनि बासु सुहावन । सुंदर गिरि काननु जलु पावन ॥ ६ ॥
 सरनि सरोज बिटप बन फूले । गुंजत मंजु मधुप रस भूले ॥ ७ ॥
 खग मृग बिपुल कोलाहल करहीं । बिरहित बैर मुदित मन चरहीं ॥ ८ ॥

dēkhata bana sara saila suhā'ē. bālamīki āśrama prabhu ā'ē. 5.
 rāma dīkha muni bāsu suhāvana. sundara giri kānanu jalu pāvana. 6.
 sarani sarōja biṭapa bana phūlē. guṇjata manju madhupa rasa bhūlē. 7.
 khaga mṛga bipula kōlāhala karahīm. birahita baira mudita mana carahīm. 8.

Looking at the beautiful forests, water-bodies (such as lakes and ponds) as well as mountains and hills, enjoying their sights and sounds, the Lord (Sri Ram) eventually arrived at the pleasant hermitage of sage Valmiki¹. (5)

Lord Ram observed that the sage's hermitage was established in the midst of beautiful Nature, and was surrounded by exceptionally charming natural scenery consisting, inter alia, of beautiful mountains and hills, of forests, as well as pleasant water bodies, such as lakes and ponds, filled with water that was clean and cool. (6)

The ponds and lakes had lotus flowers in full bloom; the trees in the surrounding forest were laden with fruits and flowers of different varieties; bees merrily buzzed all around and were happily engrossed in drinking nectar from flowers, deriving immense bliss in doing so. (7)

A motley collection of wild animals and beautiful birds of different varieties and countless species were frolicking around in merriment without harbouring any kind of animosity towards each other; they created a sort of cacophonous tumult by their combined voices¹. (8)

[Note—¹It is to be noted here that all animals and birds who lived in the vicinity of hermitages of great sages in the forests would live in perfect harmony. Neither would these animals and birds harm each other out of the natural animosity that is believed to be an intrinsic character of members of the wildlife, but they would also not harm sages, hermits, ascetics and other pious souls who lived unprotected in the dense forests in order to pursue their spiritual objectives.

The fascinating beauty, the magnificence, and the mesmerizing charm that are intrinsic to Mother Nature has been described wonderfully elsewhere also in Ram Charit Manas—apropos: (a) Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 137—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 139 (in the context of Chitrakoot where the Lord would abide for sometime before moving ahead); (b) Aranya Kand, (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 37—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 39 (when Lord Ram was searching for Sita in the wilderness, just before his arrival at Pampa lake); (c) Kishkindha Kand, (iii) Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 12—to Doha no. 17 (when Lord Ram dwelled on Mt. Prabarshan in Kishkindha).

A brief pen-sketch of the exalted sage Valmiki has already been appended as a detailed note earlier in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 19.]

दो०. सुचि सुंदर आश्रमु निरखि हरषे राजिवनेन ।
सुनि रघुबर आगमनु मुनि आगें आयउ लेन ॥ १२४ ॥

dōhā.

suci sundara āśramu nirakhi haraṣē rājivanēna.
suni raghubara āgamanu muni āgēm āya'u lēna. 124.

When Lord Ram, who had eyes like lotus flowers (rājivanēna), saw the beautiful and pleasant hermitage, he felt exhilarated¹.

No sooner sage Valmiki heard of the arrival of the exalted Lord Ram (Lord of the Raghus; “raghubara”), than he got up and came forward to welcome the Lord². (Doha no. 124)

[Note—¹The hermitages of great sages in ancient times were invariably surrounded by beautiful natural scenery. This smoothened nerves and created an aura of serenity, peace, happiness and joy that was necessary for peace and stability of mind, as well as conducive to pursuit of one’s spiritual objectives. Refer to Bharadwaj’s hermitage, for instance—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 144.

²We read that later on that when Lord Ram went to the hermitage of two other sages, i.e. Atri and Agastya, both had rushed forward to meet and welcome the Lord—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 3 (Atri); and (ii) Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 12 (Agastya).]

चौ०. मुनि कहूँ राम दंडवत कीन्हा । आसिरबादु बिप्रबर दीन्हा ॥ १ ॥
देखि राम छबि नयन जुड़ाने । करि सनमानु आश्रमहिं आने ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

muni kahum̐ rāma daṇḍavata kīnhā. āsirabādu biprabara dīnhā. 1.
dēkhi rāma chabi nayana juṛānē. kari sanamānu āśramahim̐ ānē. 2.

Lord Ram bowed his head to pay his obeisance to sage Valmiki, and the exalted sage blessed the Lord. (1)

The beautiful sight of Lord Ram (standing before him) gladdened the eyes of the sage¹, who duly honoured and welcomed the Lord, and warmly escorted him inside the hermitage. (2)

[Note—¹We have come across numerous instances where the sight of Lord Ram’s beautiful image had mesmerized the beholder, and had held the latter enthralled. {For instance, refer to: Ram Charit Manas:

(a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 199 (even the Vedas fail to describe the beauty and charm of Lord Ram’s face); (ii) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 207 (sage Vishwamitra); (iii) Chaupai line nos. 7-8

that precede Doha no. 215 (king Janak); (iv) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 220 (citizens of Janakpur); (v) Chaupai line nos. 2, 5-6 that precede Doha no. 229 (friends of Sita); (vi) Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 232 (Sita); (vii) Doha no. 242 along with Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it (the assembly at the bow-breaking venue);

And (b) Ayodhya Kand where the villagers and travellers too were held spell-bound at the bewitching beauty of Lord Ram's image—e.g. (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 89; (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 110; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 112; (iv) Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 113; (v) Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 114; (vi) Doha no. 116.

That said, during the conversation that Valmiki held with Lord Ram, which we shall be reading soon, the exalted sage lists the places where Lord Ram could abide at a subtle plane, in a symbolic way, and one of such places is the heart of those people who derive immense joy and happiness by seeing the image of Lord Ram, and who are eager to have such an opportunity—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 128 herein below.]

मुनिबर अतिथि प्रानप्रिय पाए । कंद मूल फल मधुर मगाए ॥ ३ ॥

सिय सौमित्रि राम फल खाए । तब मुनि आश्रम दिए सुहाए ॥ ४ ॥

munibara atithi prānapriya pā'ē. kanda mūla phala madhura magā'ē. 3.
siya saumitri rāma phala khā'ē. taba muni āśrama di'ē suhā'ē. 4.

The sage was absolutely exuberant and felt exhilarated to have guests who were most dear to his heart (a reference to Lord Ram and his two companions, Sita and Laxman).

So, to entertain them, and make them feel welcomed and at home, the sage called for choicest of edible roots and stems, as well as succulent fruits to offer them as refreshment. (3)

Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman (literally the son of Sumitra; “saumitri”) at the fruits (as well as the edible roots and stems) that were placed before them¹.

After that, the sage gave them a suitably pleasant place inside his hermitage so they can take rest². (4)

[Note—¹We read about similar offerings of eatables, such as fruits, roots and stems, to Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman wherever they went. Refer to Ram Charit Manas, (a) Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 88, and Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 89 (by Guha Nishad and his companions); (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 107 (at sage Bharadwaj's hermitage); (iii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 115 (offering water by villagers); (iv) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 135 (at Chitrakoot, by the hill tribes); (b) Aranya Kand, (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 3 (sage Atri's hermitage); (iii) Doha no. 34 (at Sabari's hermitage).

²In verse no. 2 herein above we have read that sage Valmiki had escorted Lord Ram and his companions inside his hermitage. Well, the sage had met the Lord at the gate of his hermitage, and after exchanging pleasantries he brought them inside, and

offered seats to them. Then the sage offered some fresh fruits, edible roots and stems as refreshments to his honourable guests. After this, he showed his guests some private quarter inside his hermitage where Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman could take rest and relax for a while.

In ancient times, great sages of Valmiki's stature had big hermitages to accommodate the many students who came to study under him, as well as other sages who lived there. There was an outer chamber where the chief of the hermitage would receive his guests and where he would hold daily discourses. Then, there were some inner or private chambers where his disciples and brother sages would live. Here, there were some extra chambers to accommodate any visitor who would come to pay a courtesy visit to the sage, as was usual to happen given the fame of great sages.

Sage Valmiki showed one such private chamber that was usually kept reserved for guests to Lord Ram to take rest.]

बालमीकि मन आनंदु भारी । मंगल मूरति नयन निहारी ॥ ५ ॥
तब कर कमल जोरि रघुराई । बोले बचन श्रवन सुखदाई ॥ ६ ॥

bālamīki mana ānam̐du bhārī. maṅgala mūrati nayana nihārī. 5.
taba kara kamala jōri raghurāī. bōlē bacana śravana sukhadāī. 6.

Sage Valmiki's Mana (mind and heart) was filled with great joy and happiness by watching Lord Ram who was in image of auspiciousness¹. (5)

Then, Lord Ram joined the palms of his lotus-like hands (as a sign of showing great respect to the sage), and said (affectionate) words that pleased the sage's ears (and gladdened his heart)². (6)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 207 (sage Vishwamitra); (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 216 (king Janak); (b) Ayodhya Kand, (iii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 106 (sage Bharadwaj); (c) Aranya Kand, (iv) Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 3 (sage Atri); (v) Chaupai line nos. 9-10 that precede Doha no. 10 (sage Sutikshan); (vi) Chaupai line nos. 9-10 that precede Doha no. 12 (sage Agastya); (d) Kishkindha Kand, (vii) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 2 (Hanuman).

In all the above instances we read that the sight of Lord Ram filled the heart of the beholder with delight and ecstasy.

²Lord Ram praised sage Valmiki and extolled his greatness as will be evident in the verses that follow herein below.]

तुम्ह त्रिकाल दरसी मुनिनाथा । बिस्व बदर जिमि तुम्हरे हाथा ॥ ७ ॥
अस कहि प्रभु सब कथा बखानी । जेहि जेहि भाँति दीन्ह बनू रानी ॥ ८ ॥

tumha trikāla darasī munināthā. bisva badara jimi tumharēñ hāthā. 7.
asa kahi prabhu saba kathā bakhāñi. jēhi jēhi bhāmṭi dīnha banu rāñi. 8.

Lord Ram said to sage Valmiki: ‘Oh Lord, thou art able to see (i.e. have a knowledge of) all things and all events in all the phases of time, the past, the present and the future (trikāla darasī). This being the case, the whole world and all the developments in it are like a plum placed in the palm of thy hand¹.’ (7)

Saying this, Lord Ram told the sage the whole story about how the queen (Kaikeyi) had sent him to the forest². (8)

[Note—¹To wit, if a plum, or for that matter anything else, is kept in the palm of a person, he can see, feel, smell and examine it clearly and closely. Likewise, since the sage had the mystical ability to know everything of the past, the present and the future, about all happenings anywhere in the world, nothing was secret from him. In a sense, the world was like a plum in one’s hand, for the sage could tell everything about the world by his first hand knowledge about it.

²Lord Ram has just told the sage that he knew everything that happens in this world. Then what was the need for Lord to relate the story of why he had come to the forest; didn’t the sage know about it?

Well, it appears that the first statement of the Lord, where he said that the sage was all-knowing, was merely a courteous way of opening the conversation. Lord Ram wanted to brief sage Valmiki about the developments that forced him to come to the forest with Sita and Laxman, and in deference to sage Valmiki’s exalted stature as a senior sage, and in order to give due honour and respect to him, the Lord broached the subject of his forest exile in a very polite and courteous way, using a language that was polite and of a courtly fashion.]

दो०. तात बचन पुनि मातु हित भाइ भरत अस राउ ।

मो कहूँ दरस तुम्हार प्रभु सबु मम पुन्य प्रभाउ ॥ १२५ ॥

dōhā.

tāta bacana puni mātu hita bhā'i bharata asa rā'u.

mō kahum' darasa tumhāra prabhu sabu mama pun'ya prabhā'u. 125.

Lord Ram told sage Valmiki: ‘Oh Lord! There were many factors that came into play for my being exiled to the forest. First, it was to obey my father’s words, then it was to honour my mother’s wish, and added to it was the opportunity to let Bharat ascend the throne to become a king. Nay, that is not all—I was to have the honour of seeing your holy self (which is a golden opportunity of a lifetime that I would have missed had I not been banished to the forest).

So therefore, I consider myself lucky as all these developments are a reward for my meritorious deeds (because so many good things have happened simultaneously by the single act of my coming to the forest).’¹ (Doha no. 125)

[Note—¹What an exemplary noble character Lord Ram had! Instead of showing any regret or rancour, or accusing anyone for his banishment to the forest that has caused

so much suffering to him, and to his wife and brother, Lord Ram looks at the positive side of the developments, and counts his blessings instead of lamenting and showing anger.

A similar idea that Lord Ram is an upholder of principles of Dharma (the virtues of righteousness, probity, propriety, noble conduct and thought) in all its aspects is endorsed by sage Vasistha in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 254.]

चौ०. देखि पाय मुनिराय तुम्हारे । भए सुकृत सब सुफल हमारे ॥ १ ॥
अब जहँ राउर आयसु होई । मुनि उदबेगु न पावै कोई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

dēkhi pāya munirāya tumhārē. bha'ē sukr̥ta saba suphala hamārē. 1.
aba jaham' rā'ura āyasu hō'ī. muni udabēgu na pāvai kō'ī. 2.

[Lord Ram wanted to seek sage Valmiki's advice regarding the place where he and his companions, Sita and Laxman, could stay in the forest. So the Lord continued politely—]

‘Oh exalted king amongst sages (munirāya)! It has been an honour for us to see thine holy feet today, for this privilege represents the reward for all our good deeds. (1)

Now, in whatever place thou wouldst tell us to abide (in the forest, during the period we are to stay there), we would gladly do. Prithee, let that place be such where our stay wouldst cause no problems, inconvenience or disturbance to sages, hermits and ascetics already dwelling there. (2)

मुनि तापस जिन्ह तें दुखु लहहीं । ते नरेस बिनु पावक दहहीं ॥ ३ ॥
मंगल मूल बिप्र परितोषू । दहइ कोटि कुल भूसुर रोषू ॥ ४ ॥
अस जियँ जानि कहिअ सोइ ठाऊँ । सिय सौमित्रि सहित जहँ जाऊँ ॥ ५ ॥
तहँ रचि रुचिर परन तून साला । बासु करौं कछु काल कृपाला ॥ ६ ॥

muni tāpasa jinha tēm dukhu lahaḥīm. tē narēsa binu pāvaka dahahīm. 3.
maṅgala mūla bipra paritōṣū. daha'i kōṭi kula bhūsura rōṣū. 4.
asa jiyam' jāni kahi'a sō'i ṭhā'ūm'. siya saumitri sahita jaham' jā'ūm'. 5.
taham' raci rucira parana ṭṛna sālā. bāsu karaum kachu kāla kṛpālā. 6.

This is because a king who becomes a cause of annoyance or inconvenience of any kind whatsoever to great sages, hermits and ascetics is destined to be doomed, for such a monarch would be consumed in the fire of their curse even without a physical fire burning. (3)

Verily indeed and forsooth, that which grants satisfaction, joy and peace to pious souls (such as the sages, hermits and ascetics) is a harbinger of all auspiciousness and

good fortunes¹, while on the other hand, causing any kind of annoyance to these holy souls, that may provoke their anger and consequent curse, is like a wildfire that can scorch to death many generations of their tormentors². (4)

Keeping this in mind (as outlined in verse nos. 2-4 herein above), I prithee to please advice me about a place in the forest where I can go and dwell with Sita and Laxman (saumitri). (5)

At that place, I shall erect a thatched hut made of leaves and grass, and abide for sometime³. (6)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 3, and (ii) Chaupai line no. 34 that precedes Doha no. 4 (king Dasrath tells sage Vasistha, his guru, that all his good fortunes are a result of the service he has rendered at the sage's feet, whereby he got the sage's blessings).

Bharat too says the same thing in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 255.

²A similar idea as expressed in this part of the verse is also reiterated elsewhere in Ram Charit Manas: apropos—(a) Kishkindha Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 17; (b) Uttar Kand, (ii) Chaupai line no. 14 that precedes Doha no. 109; (iii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 112.

³Refer to Veda Vyas' "Adhyatma Ramayan", Ayodhya Kand, Canto 6, verse nos. 50-51.

By this statement, Lord Ram has made it clear that he would stay at the place suggested by sage Valmiki for only some time, and not permanently, for it is not appropriate for a hermit or ascetic who is supposed to have renounced the world and all its comforts, someone who is called a 'Sanyasi', to stay at one place for long. Besides this general mandate for this class of people as prescribed in the Upanishads and other scriptures, the other reason why Lord Ram had to move on was the main objective of his coming to the forest—viz. the elimination of the demons, and these cruel fellows lived in the deeper and the denser parts of the forests further south, i.e. the un-inhabitable and fiercer areas called the 'Dandakaranya'.

So we shall read by-and-by that after spending some time at Chitrakoot, the place which sage Valmiki would advice the Lord to go, the Lord would move ahead to enter the denser and deeper parts of the remote forest, first to a place called Panchavati where Sita would be abducted by Ravana, and thence to the Dandakaranya forest on his way to Lanka. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Aranya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 3; (ii) Doha no. 9 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 16-18 that precede Doha no. 13; and (iv) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 31.}]

सहज सरल सुनि रघुबर बानी । साधु साधु बोले मुनि ग्यानी ॥ ७ ॥

कस न कहहु अस रघुकुलकेतू । तुम्ह पालक संतत श्रुति सेतू ॥ ८ ॥

sahaja sarala suni raghubara bānī. sādhu sādhu bōlē muni gyānī. 7.
kasa na kahahu asa raghukulakētū. tumha pālaka santata śruti sētū. 8.

When the learned sage Valmiki (muni gyānī) heard these honest and politely spoken words of Lord Ram, the exalted member of king Raghu's family (raghubara), he was very pleased and exclaimed: 'Oh gracious Lord, I truly appreciate thee, and thine simplicity and honesty. (7)

Verily, say why wouldst thee naught speak such (polite, courteous, unpretentious and simple words), oh Lord who is the flag-bearer of the glory of the great and illustrious family of king Raghu (raghukulakētū), for thou art always an upholder of the dignity and honour of sages and saints¹, as well as the sanctity of the principles of good conduct and noble thoughts as envisioned and laid down in the scriptures (i.e. the Vedas) (pālaka santata śruti sētū)². (8)

[Note—¹This refers to Chaupai line nos. 2-4 herein above.

When Lord Ram later on met sage Agastya and sought the sage's advice about the place he should go and live in a different part of forest, the exalted sage had expressed an idea mirroring that of sage Valmiki now—see: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3, and 12-18 that precede Doha no. 13.

²Earlier in the story we have read that when sage Vasistha had gone to meet Lord Ram to convey his father Dasrath's message, that the latter wished to anoint the Lord to the throne of Ayodhya, Lord Ram had shown so great respect and politeness to the sage that he had also made an observation as done by sage Valmiki presently. Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 9 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it, and Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it.

A similar idea vis-à-vis Lord Ram's virtuous nature and his diligence in upholding the laws of Dharma has been reiterated later on by sage Vasistha during the meeting held in Chitrakoot where Bharat had gone to persuade the Lord to return home—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-5 that precede Doha no. 254.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 13; and (ii) Doha no. 192.

The Chanda line no. 1 that follows herein below too endorses this view.]

छं०. श्रुति सेतु पालक राम तुम्ह जगदीस माया जानकी । १ ।
जो सृजति जगु पालति हरति रुख पाइ कृपानिधान की ॥ २ ॥
जो सहससीसु अहीसु महिधरु लखनु सचराचर धनी । ३ ।
सुर काज धरि नरराज तनु चले दलन खल निसिचर अनी ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

śruti sētu pālaka rāma tumha jagadīsa māyā jānakī. 1.
jō srjati jagu pālati harati rukha pā'i kṛpānidhāna kī. 2.
jō sahasasīsu ahīsu mahidharu lakhanu sacarācara dhanī. 3.
sura kāja dhari nararāja tanu calē dalana khala nisicara anī. 4.

[Sage Valmiki continued—] ‘Oh Lord, thou art an upholder of the laws (of Dharma) as propounded by the Vedas. Thou art the Supreme Lord of the world¹. Sita, on the other hand, is a personified form of Maya (which is the cosmic power of the Supreme Being). (Chanda line no. 1)

[What is ‘Maya’ and its role in this creation? Valmiki answers this esoteric question that is often very confusing and baffling for even great scholars. He says, should we say he ‘clarifies’—] This Maya is responsible for creation, sustenance, and conclusion (bringing to and end) of this creation as per wish of the Supreme Lord². (Chanda line no. 2)

Laxman is a personified form of the celestial Serpent known as ‘Lord Sheshnath’ who holds the earth on his thousand hoods³. (Chanda line no. 3)

It is for a noble cause and to fulfill the promise the Lord had made to the gods⁴ that thou art going to the forest to eliminate the scourge of the wicked demons⁵. (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 197.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Doha no. 85—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 86; (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 116—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 117.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 197.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 186 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 187.

⁵Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 254 (sage Vasistha); (b) Aranya Kand, Doha no. 9 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it (proclamation by Lord Ram himself).

Later on in the story we shall read that when Lord Ram met sage Agastya, the Lord had clearly hinted to the sage regarding his mission of eliminating the demons—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 13.]

सो०. राम सरूप तुम्हार बचन अगोचर बुद्धिपर ।

अबिगत अकथ अपार नेति नेति नित निगम कह ॥ १२६ ॥

sōraṭhā.

rāma sarūpa tumhāra bacana agōcara bud'dhipara.

abigata akatha apāra nēti nēti nita nigama kaha. 126.

Sage Valmiki continued: ‘Oh Lord Ram, your divine form is indeed sublime and esoteric inasmuch as it is beyond the ability of speech to describe it, or conception of

the mind to even imagine of it. Indeed, it is unknown and beyond comprehension; it is beyond the reach of the intellect.

It is so mystical that on the one hand it inseparable from what is known, and yet beyond what is known. It is indescribable, infinite, and it is beyond even the Vedas to say anything definite and conclusive about it so much so that they unanimously declare every time that thy form is “Not this, not this” (*nēti nēti*; or ‘neither this, nor that’¹).² (Sortha no. 126)

[Note—¹We read that Lord Ram, who is a personified form of the supreme Brahm, the Supreme Being known as the Parmatma, or the cosmic Consciousness in a personified form, is ‘on the one hand, inseparable from what is known, and yet beyond what is known’. It simply and obviously mean that the Lord’s real form is so mystical and mysterious that it is impossible to limit it to any given definition or description. Hence, the Vedas use the term ‘Neti Neti’—meaning that if a person uses an example from the known world and says ‘this is one of the forms of Lord Ram’, he would be correct, but at the same time it does not mean that anything he has not cited as an example is not a form of Lord Ram, or that even if the entire visible and known world is said to be one or the other forms of Lord Ram, then this does not mean that whatever is not visible or known is ‘not Ram’, for Lord Ram is even there where the mind and the intellect has not reached.

Put simply, Neti-neti means that all the countless ways in which the scriptures have tried their best to describe or define the supreme Brahm, who represents cosmic Consciousness, are not the only way one can know about Brahm, for there are equal number of other countless ways in which Brahm can be known or understood, but the scriptures have not described or defined them.

Other references in Ram Charit Manas where the phrase “Neti-neti” has been used in relation to Lord Ram’s divine form are the following: (a) Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 12; (ii) Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 51; (iii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 203; (iii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 216; (iv) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 341; (b) Ayodhya Kand, (v) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 93; (c) Aranya Kand, (vi) Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 27; (d) Kishkindha Kand, (vii) Chanda line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 10; (e) Lanka Kand, (viii) Doha no. 117-a; (f) Uttar Kand, (ix) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 124; and (x) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 216.]

चौ०. जगु पेखन तुम्ह देखनिहारे । बिधि हरि संभु नचावनिहारे ॥ १ ॥

तेउ न जानहिं मरमु तुम्हारा । औरु तुम्हहि को जाननिहारा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

jagu pēkhana tumha dēkhanihārē. bidhi hari sambhu nacāvanihārē. 1.
tē'u na jānahiṁ maramu tumhārā. auru tumhahi kō jānanihārē. 2.

This creation (or the entire world) is simply a spectacle or a drama enacted on stage, while you, as the supreme Brahm, watch it like a spectator would watch a drama being played on a stage, and this includes the great Trinity Gods consisting of Brahma (the creator), Lord Hari (also known as Lord Vishnu, who is the sustainer and care-

taker of this creation), and Lord Shambhu (i.e. Lord Shiva, who is the concluder of this spectacular play). (1)

Even these above mentioned Trinity Gods (who are the senior most Gods in the hierarchy of Gods) do not know your secrets and mysteries, say then how is it possible for anyone else to know anything about you (in a conclusive manner)?

[To wit, Lord Ram's primary form is divine, sublime, infinite and cosmic in nature, a form that incorporates every single unit in creation, yet it is much more than what is said of him, and is beyond everything known and said about him.]¹ (2)

[Note—¹In the context of the idea expressed in these verses here, refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 241—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 242 where we find that everyone sees, perceives or understands Lord Ram in the way that suits his liking and is accessible by his mind, but whatever way the Lord is seen or perceived or understood is not the only and exclusive form of the Lord, for he is much more and very different from any of the limited views expressed about him by individuals who endeavour to say something about the Lord.

Refer also to sage Vasistha's observation about Lord Ram in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 254.

A similar idea is expressed by Hanuman in the court of the demon king Ravana; refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 21 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-9 that precede it.

The saintly crow Kaabhusund has made the same observation in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 91—to Doha no. 92.

Gods, saints and mother earth have reiterated the same idea when they prayed to the supreme Brahm—refer to: Baal Kand, Chanda line nos. 1-9 that precede Doha no. 186.]

सोइ जानइ जेहि देहु जनाई । जानत तुम्हहि तुम्हइ होइ जाई ॥ ३ ॥

तुम्हरिहि कृपाँ तुम्हहि रघुनंदन । जानहिं भगत भगत उर चंदन ॥ ४ ॥

sō'i jāna'i jēhi dēhu janā'ī. jānata tumhahi tumha'i hō'i jā'ī. 3.
tumharihi kṛpām̐ tumhahi raghunandana. jānahim̐ bhagata bhagata ura
candana. 4.

But however, oh Lord (inspite of this mystical form of yours that is beyond conception and comprehension), a person can know or be enlightened about you (and your form) if you so wish and become gracious upon the former. [To wit, a person may be fortunate to know about your Truth only if you are gracious upon him and bless him with this boon. Otherwise, it is impossible.]¹

And, once your esoteric and mystical form that is glorious, sublime and divine becomes known to a person (or the person is able to realize the supreme Truth and the Consciousness that you represent), the latter would be one like you, he would be a living image of your glorious and radiant form². (3)

Oh Lord Ram (raghunandana) who grants peace and bliss to the heart of devotees³—it is only by thine grace that the blessed devotee is able to realize thy ‘true form’, and not otherwise. (4)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 118; (b) Uttar Kand, (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 126—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 127.

²This refers to the state of self realization when the spiritual seeker becomes enlightened about the Absolute Truth at the core of this existence, i.e. about the cosmic Consciousness that Lord Ram represents, as well as the fact that the individual person’s own ‘self’, his own Atma, his own soul is also the same Consciousness residing in his physical body. This being the case, it becomes obvious to him that there is basically no difference between him and Lord Ram, because both are the same Consciousness existing in two separate individuals.

This is the metaphysical Truth that is espoused by and expounded in the Upanishads, and its understanding would fill the seeker of that Truth with spiritual ecstasy and profound contentment.

In Srimad Bhagwad Geeta, a similar idea is expressed in 18/55.

The glories of Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness and the only Truth in creation, and it being synonymous with the Atma or the ‘true self’ of all creatures, whether it be an ordinary person or Lord Ram, as in our present narrative, is explicitly expounded and clearly elucidated in ‘Mundak Upanishad’, Cantos (Mundak) 2 and 3. With reference to the specific idea expressed in the present verses we are reading, refer especially to Mundak 3, verse nos. 3 and 9. This is the 2nd Upanishad of the Atharva Veda.

³Now, what are the characteristics of a true devotee who becomes a living image of Lord Ram, who reflects Lord Ram’s virtues in his own person? Well, we get the answer to this question in Ram Charit Manas itself. Refer: (a) Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 128—to Doha no. 131 (according to sage Valmiki); (b) Aranya Kand, (ii) Chaupai line nos. 4, 7-8 that precede Doha no. 35—to Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 36 (Lord Ram’s advice to Sabari); (c) Sundar Kand, (iii) Chaupai line nos. 3-7 that precede Doha no. 48 (Lord Ram’s advice to Vibhishan); (d) Uttar Kand, (iv) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 43, and Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 44 (Lord Ram’s advice to citizens of Ayodhya); (v) Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 54 (Parvati observes while discussing the divinity of Lord Ram with her husband, Lord Shiva).]

चिदानन्दमय देह तुम्हारी । बिगत बिकार जान अधिकारी ॥ ५ ॥

नर तनु धरेहु संत सुर काजा । कहहु करहु जस प्राकृत राजा ॥ ६ ॥

cidānandamaya dēha tumhārī. bigata bikāra jāna adhikārī. 5.

nara tanu dharēhu santa sura kājā. kahahu karahu jasa prākṛta rājā. 6.

Your divine form is an embodiment of Truth, eternal blissfulness, and cosmic Consciousness (cidānandamaya dēha)¹. It is sublime and subtle, and it is without

any taint, blemish or grossness that is associated with all other forms of all living beings in this gross mundane world (*bigata bikāra*).

Verily indeed and in all sooth, this esoteric form of yours is known to only those who are eligible to know it (as already said in verse nos. 3-4 herein above) (*jāna adhikārī*)². (5)

You have assumed a human form to accomplish an important task on behalf of saints and gods (which is to establish peace on earth by eliminating the terror of the demons, as well as to oblige countless devotees who yearned to have a direct communication with the Supreme Being at a personal level, to bless sages, hermits and ascetics who had been doing penances and observing austerities in an effort to attain their spiritual objectives, and to restore the principles of Dharma on earth).

[To wit, though Lord Ram's primary form is pure cosmic Consciousness that has no physical form, for it is sublime and subtle, pervading throughout the creation uniformly, but the same Consciousness, also revealed and known as the supreme Brahm at the cosmic plane, assumes a physical form as a human being, with the name of 'Ram', in order to oblige the gods, saints and sages, and fulfill their wishes.]³ (6)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 87; (b) Uttar Kand, (ii) Doha no. 52-a; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 72.

²Lord Ram's divine form has been repeatedly reiterated by Lord Shiva, who is the most exalted and wisest amongst the gods—refer to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 51; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 116; (iii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 119; (b) Uttar Kand, (iv) Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 52.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 186—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 187; (ii) Doha no. 192; and (b) Uttar Kand, (iii) Doha no. 72.]

राम देखि सुनि चरित तुम्हारे । जड़ मोहहिं बुध होहिं सुखारे ॥ ७ ॥

तुम्ह जो कहहु करहु सबु साँचा । जस काछिअ तस चाहिअ नाचा ॥ ८ ॥

rāma dēkhi suni carita tumhārē. jaṛa mōhahim budha hōhim sukhārē. 7.
tumha jō kahahu karahu sabu sāmčā. jasa kāchi'a tasa cāhi'a nācā. 8.

Therefore, oh Lord, those who lack sufficient wisdom and knowledge are confused about your true form when they see or read or hear about your worldly deeds because they resemble those of an ordinary man (and do not fit in with what has been said about your true divine form—as narrated in the scriptures as well as in doha no. 126 and verse no. 5 herein above).

On the other hand, those who are wise and enlightened are able to understand the reality behind your physical form, and why you had acted in the way you did in your role as a human being, and this realization makes them feel very joyous and happy (as they are thoroughly gladdened in their hearts and enthralled in their minds while reading and hearing about your story and the deeds that you have done in your role as a human being)¹. (7)

Truly, what you say you implement in practice—for you had told the gods, mother earth and the sages, who had prayed to you, that for their sake you will become a human being and take a birth in the household of the king of Ayodhya², and you carried out your promise by revealing yourself as a prince. As a human being, you have played your role to perfection; going through all the steps a human being passes through in his life, without giving any hint that you are the Supreme Being and the cosmic Lord of this creation, and not an ordinary man³. (8)

[Note—¹Even Sati, the consort of Lord Shiva, was confused about who Lord Ram actually was when she saw her husband, Lord Shiva, bowing his head most reverentially to Lord Ram who was roaming in the forest in search of Sita—refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 48—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 50.

Sati's bewilderment and doubting Lord Ram's divinity had grave consequences for her, for Lord Shiva was constrained to leave her to her fate. By-and-by, Sati burnt herself in the sacrificial fire at her father's place. This is narrated in detail in Ram Charit Manas: (a) Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 51—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 60; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 64; (iii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 107—to Doha no. 111; (iv) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 121—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 122; and (b) Uttar Kand, (v) Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 56.

What is the negative effect of casting doubts on Lord Ram? Lord Shiva answers this in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 119. To wit, if one harbours unwarranted doubts about Lord Ram then the result would be disastrous for his spiritual well-being, for all his wisdom, all the good effects of knowledge that a person has acquired by the study of the scriptures, all the virtues and positive energy accumulated over time by pursuing various religious practices—are all rendered null and void.

The saintly crow Kaagbhusund has also reiterated this view in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 72—to Doha no. 73.]

²A skilled and refined stage artist plays his role to perfection on stage, and while on stage even his nearest family members would not recognize him, but once he steps down from the stage he reverts back to his original form by which the world knows him. An exactly similar idea is expressed by the saintly crow Kaagbhusund in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 72.

Likewise, as long as the supreme Brahm, the Supreme Being and the Lord of the world, remained on earth in the form of a human being known by the name of 'Lord Ram', no one would have any hint regarding who this gentleman actually was. Lord Ram grew up like other children, played with friends and got his education like all children of his age do; then he got married, faced intrigue and jealousy in his own home, as a consequence he was banished to the forest, where he walked like any man would, lived here and there in exile, in thatched huts, eating and drinking like other ordinary people, had his wife, Sita abducted, wailed in grief for her, searched for her in the wilds like a man obsessed by his wife, befriended humble creatures, launched a massive operation to retrieve her from the clutches of her abductors, raged a bloody war in Lanka, returned home to ascend the throne and become a king of Ayodhya, ruled for long years like a great human king, and then shed his body to ascend to the heaven.

In this context, refer to verses of Ram Charit Manas that describe that the Supreme Being became a human being, and then grew up like any other child: (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 2-5 that precede Doha no. 187; (ii) Doha no. 192, 198 and 199; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1 and 7 that precede Doha no. 200; (iv) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 202; (v) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 203—to Doha no. 205.]

दो०. पूँछेहु मोहि कि रहौं कहँ मैं पूँछत सकुचाउँ ।

जहँ न होहु तहँ देहु कहि तुम्हहि देखावौं ठाउँ ॥ १२७ ॥

dōhā.

pūm̐chēhu mōhi ki rahauṁ kaham̐ mair̐ pūm̐chata sakucā'um̐.
jaham̐ na hōhu taham̐ dēhu kahi tumhahi dēkhāvauṁ ṭhā'um̐. 127.

[After having praised Lord Ram and expounding briefly about the Lord's true form, sage Valmiki now addresses the primary query of the Lord who had asked the sage to tell him where he could go and live for some time in the forest—apropos: Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 126 herein above.]

Sage Valmiki said to Lord Ram: 'Oh Lord, thou hast asked me to tell thee where thou shouldst abide, but let me be frank and ask thee a similar question: "Tell me Lord, which is that place where you aren't present?"

If thou couldst answer this simple question of mine, then I surely wouldst show thee the place where thou couldst go and abide.

[To wit, since thou art a personified form of the cosmic Consciousness which is all-pervading and omnipresent in this creation, prithee tell me about a place where thou art not present, and I shalt then guide you thither. According to my knowledge, there is no place in this entire creation where thou art not present in one form or the other, whether that form is a visible and grosser form, or is in an invisible and subtle form. This being the case, where can I advice thee to go, because there is not a single unit in this creation where I can't find thee.]¹ (Doha no. 127)

[Note—¹The saintly crow Kaagbhusund reiterates what sage Valmiki says here about Lord Ram being present everywhere in this creation in his primary form as pure cosmic Consciousness. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 3-7 that precede Doha no. 72; (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 80—to Doha no. 81.

A similar idea is expressed by Lord Shiva in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 51.

This observation by sage Valmiki that there is not a single place where Lord Ram is not present, finds a resonance in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 201 where Lord Ram shows mother Kaushalya his cosmic form.

Sage Sutikshan reiterates this view that Lord Ram lives everywhere in a subtle form, in the subtle heart of all living beings—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 17 that precedes Doha no. 11.

Even Mandodari, the chaste wife of the demon king Ravana, had described the cosmic all-pervading form of Lord Ram while trying to dissuade her husband from creating animosity with the Lord. Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai

line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 14—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 15.

Earlier, king Janak, the father of Sita and the father-in-law of Lord Ram too asserts the same thing—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 341.]

चौ०. सुनि मुनि बचन प्रेम रस साने । सकुचि राम मन महुँ मुसुकाने ॥ १ ॥
बालमीकि हँसि कहहिं बहोरी । बानी मधुर अमिअ रस बोरी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sunī muni bacana prēma rasa sānē. sakuci rāma mana mahum̐ musukānē. 1.
bālamīki haṁṣi kahahīṁ bahōrī. bānī madhura ami'a rasa bōrī. 2.

When Lord Ram heard sage Valmiki saying aforesaid words of high praise for him, words that were soaked with great respect and affection for the Lord, he felt abashed externally even as he smiled internally¹. (1)

After a little pause², sage Valmiki politely smiled and said sweet words that appeared to be soaked in nectar. (2)

[Note—¹It is because Lord Ram knew that whatever the sage had said was indeed true, but at the same time being praised so highly by a great sage of Valmiki's stature made the Lord feel shy. This shyness of the Lord was one other reason which made him smile subtly, for he could not deny what the sage had asserted, and at the same time he would not like the world to know about his true identity. This is very clear when Lord Ram told mother Kaushalya not to tell anybody that her son has revealed to her his cosmic form—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 201 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that follow it.

²If we close our eyes for a second and imagine what was happening at that moment, things would be clear. After sage Valmiki heaped praises upon Lord Ram on his face, the Lord felt a bit embarrassed and became abashed. Valmiki was closely observing the Lord, and the Lord's shyness amused the great sage who smiled at the Lord's embarrassment and abashed look, thoroughly enjoyed the moment and derived immense spiritual pleasure by looking at the Lord in this state, and developed immense fatherly affection for the Lord.

After this brief interlude, the sage did not wish to put Lord Ram to more discomfiture by saying anything more in his praise, and therefore decided to answer the Lord's main query—'where should he live'.

But the great sage was not to be so easily outwitted, for, as we shall soon find out, the places that he lists now onwards do not relate to this gross physical world, but are subtle in form as they refer to the grand virtues and excellent characters that a devotee of the Lord should possess to enable Lord Ram to abide in such person's subtle heart honourably, comfortably and peacefully for eternity.

This view resonates perfectly with the idea of the Lord's true devotee being an image of the Lord himself, because even as a home is recognized by the person who lives inside it, the home reflects the personality of its resident, so does the devotee in

whose subtle heart Lord Ram dwells is recognized as an image or representative of the Lord himself.

And surely and certainly, the Lord, as anyone of us with a good upbringing, would not like to live in a polluted and dirty home, which implies that the exemplary nature and purity of character and the grand virtues listed by Valmiki herein below are the hallmarks by which Lord Ram and his devotees are recognized.

This is why the sage ‘smiled’—because he would tell Lord Ram to remember that he has a subtle presence in the form of pure consciousness that resides in the bodies of all living beings in this creation, so he has no dearth of places where he can go and live in this world!]

सुनहु राम अब कहउँ निकेता । जहाँ बसहु सिय लखन समेता ॥ ३ ॥

जिन्ह के श्रवन समुद्र समाना । कथा तुम्हारि सुभग सरि नाना ॥ ४ ॥

भरहिं निरंतर होहिं न पूरे । तिन्ह के हिय तुम्ह कहूँ गृह रूरे ॥ ५ ॥

sunahu rāma aba kaha'um' nikētā. jahām' basahu siya lakhana samētā. 3.
jinha kē śravana samudra samānā. kathā tumhāri subhaga sari nānā. 4.
bharahim nirantara hōhim na pūrē. tinha kē hiya tumha kahum' gr̥ha rūrē. 5.

{It must be pointed out in the beginning that the qualities listed by sage Valmiki herein below are all possessed by a devotee of Lord Ram as well as by a pious soul, a true saint. By inference therefore, a devotee of Lord Ram is a saintly person and a pious soul too.

Another point to note is that many of the virtues enumerated here overlap each other, and there is no clear boundary or demarcation lines that would exclude one good virtue from the other. This is natural and obvious, because a good and holy person is a combination of many factors, and not some selected ones.

The underlining idea in these verses is that in order to become eligible for being selected by Lord Ram to make a person's heart, mind, thoughts and the inner-self as his holy abode, like the sacred image of the Lord that is consecrated inside the sanctum sanctorum of the Lord's temple, then that person must have a combination of all the virtues in him, and not some selected ones; that person must be an embodiment of all the excellent characters and stellar virtues enumerated by sage Valmiki. Such a fortunate person must ensure that he or she does nothing that would cause any embarrassment to the Lord for having selected him or her as his abode; the person must take special precaution not to defile the ‘temple where Lord Ram lives’ by violating any of the principles listed here by sage Valmiki.}

Sage Valmiki told Lord Ram: ‘Listen Lord Ram, I shall now enumerate all those dwelling places where you can comfortably and joyously live along with Sita (your consort) and Laxman (your brother)¹. (3)

Your abode shall be the heart of those whose ears are like the oceans which never get filled even though numerous rivers representing various versions of your divine stories keep pouring into them continuously.

[To wit, those who do not tire of hearing the divine stories and glories of the Lord are true devotees of the Lord. This is also therefore one of the forms of Bhakti—

having devotion and love for the Lord, because only those things that someone loves very dearly are the ones that would not make him or her fed up with.]² (4-5)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 53; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 126.

We must note that all the places advised by sage Valmiki are those that are pure, holy and pious, for the Lord cannot live in a place that is corrupt and unholy by any count. By corollary it means that all these places where Lord Ram would reside are indicators of 'Bhakti' because only a practitioner of Bhakti, i.e. a 'Bhakta' or a devotee of the Lord, can have these wonderful qualities in him, for otherwise that place cannot be pure enough for the Lord to live there even for a second.

Looking at all the places described as being the abode of Lord Ram, we come to the conclusion that they represent epitomes of devotion, spiritualism, righteousness, ethics and probity. No doubt then that those who seek the Lord at these places are led down the good path towards righteous and noble living. These indicative places are our guide to leading a noble and virtuous life, because when we seek God at these places, we tend to constantly remind ourselves that God does not live in an impure, unholy, vicious, corrupted and deceitful environ. It is a sort of 'elimination process' whereby we exclude all the places which are dark, un-righteous, devoid of good and probity because God – who is pure and splendorous like the sun which lightens the world – cannot dwell in spiritual darkness, deceit and ignorance.

We can also interpret all the dwelling places of Lord Ram as being characters of those who practice Bhakti, as well as those who are true saints and holy persons.

Such places where Lord Ram can, or should, reside as advised by sage Valmiki, are enumerated herein below from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 128—to Doha no. 131.

In this context, we can also refer to Veda Vyas' "Adhyatma Ramayan", Ayodhya Kand, Canto 6, verse nos. 51-63 where sage Valmiki has listed the places where Lord Ram ought to live.

The glory of Lord Ram's divine story, its spiritual importance and significance, and the rewards or benefits one gets by listening, reciting, singing, reading or preaching it has been endorsed at numerous places in Ram Charit Manas. Refer to—(a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 10; (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 31—to Doha no. 32; (iii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 35;

(b) Aranya Kand, (iv) Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 16; (v) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 35;

(c) Uttar Kand, (vi) Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 53; (vii) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 126; (viii) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 129; (ix) Chaupai line nos. 3-6 that precede Doha no. 130.

²This is the 1st place where Lord Ram should live.]

लोचन चातक जिन्ह करि राखे । रहहिं दरस जलधर अभिलाषे ॥ ६ ॥

निदरहिं सरित सिंधु सर भारी । रूप बिंदु जल होहिं सुखारी ॥ ७ ॥

तिन्ह कें हृदय सदन सुखदायक । बसहु बंधु सिय सह रघुनायक ॥ ८ ॥

lōcana cātaka jinha kari rākhē. rahahim darasa jaladhara abhilāṣē. 6.
nidarahim sarita sindhu sara bhārī. rūpa bindu jala hōhim sukhārī. 7.
tinha kēm hr̥daya sadana sukhadāyaka. basahu bandhu siya saha
raghunāyaka. 8.

Your abode shall be the heart of those who constantly wish to see you (always concentrate and have their mind fixed on your thoughts) just like the Chakor bird¹ which gazes at the rain-bearing cloud and is so mesmerized by its beauty that it has vowed to drink only the water in the form of rain drops that the cloud would directly put in its beak, and would rather die of thirst than seeking to quench its thirst elsewhere, for it scorns at other sources of water such as the ocean, the river and the lakes. (6-7)

Oh Lord, you, along with your brother (Laxman) and wife Sita, should abide in the heart of such persons as described herein above, who wish to see the Lord, be near the Lord, and enjoy his company, for such an abode is a place that would be joyful for you, and where you can live very delightfully². (8)

[Note—¹Chatak bird = the sparrow hawk.

In Tulsidas' classic book of Dohas, the 2-line verses that succinctly convey an idea in a very straightforward way, has many such references to Chatak. Refer: Dohawali, Doha nos. 282-283, 288, 294, 302, 304, 311.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 1; (ii) Doha no. 52.

²To wit, just like this bird, true devotee who practices Bhakti fixes his attention on the Lord, on his form and thoughts. He seeks solace and succour only from the Lord; the Lord is his only redeemer and lover. He is completely devoted to the Lord so much so that he would rather die than to seek anything from any other God.

This is the 2nd place where Lord Ram should live.]

दो०. जसु तुम्हार मानस बिमल हंसिनि जीहा जासु ।

मुकताहल गुन गन चुनइ राम बसहु हियँ तासु ॥ १२८ ॥

dōhā.

jasu tumhāra mānasa bimala hansini jīhā jāsu.

mukatāhala guna gana cuna'i rāma basahu hiyaṁ tāsū. 128.

Oh Lord Ram! You should make your abode in the heart of those whose swan-like tongue picks up your virtues which are like pearls present in the pristine pure lake known as Mansarovar¹ which symbolizes your fame.

[To wit, the Lord should live in the heart and mind and thought of those who always love to speak of the Lord and praise him, who would not have enough of hearing, reading, singing and reciting of Lord Ram's divine story, who would thoroughly enjoy it and find joy and spiritual bliss and peace by it.]² (Doha no. 128)

[Note—¹The Mansarovar Lake is lake of crystal clean water located in the upper reaches of the Himalayas. Pearls are strewn in this lake. Majestic Swans float on the

surface of the water in this lake. These Swans possess a special quality that enables them to pick these pearls and eat them, leaving all other things in the water. This metaphor is used to stress that Bhakti entails paying attention to the glories of the Lord and his virtues while reading or listening to the Lord's stories, and leaving aside all other things as being of no consequence. A true practitioner of Bhakti focuses his attention on the good things in the story of the Lord and steps aside from those that are not, for he understands that since the Lord has assumed a human form it is obligatory upon him to exhibit at least some of the failings of a human being so that he can play his part to perfection.

Remember: The Lord is perfect in everything he does, so it would be wrong on his part if he does not show some of the shortcomings of an ordinary human being once he has assumed this form. So a true Bhakta does not allow himself to be distracted by the many human aspects in the story of the Lord. His devotion, love and faith in the Lord and his divinity, i.e. his Bhakti for the Lord, are not at all affected by such inconsequential and superficial discrepancies and inconsistencies in the Lord's glories.

Lord Ram advises Sabari the same thing in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 35, and to Laxman in Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 16.

²This is the 3rd place where Lord Ram should live, and it compliments and supplements the idea expressed in verse nos. 4-5 herein above that precede this Doha no. 128.

This is because by listening to, as well as by reading, understanding and preaching of the divine story of Lord Ram as narrated in Ram Charit Manas, one would be able to delve deeper into the spiritual angle of the Lord's story, and learn about the many different stellar qualities, auspicious virtues and exemplary character that Lord Ram possessed, and which were all in conformity with the principles of Dharma that the Lord stood for, represented, and implemented in his own life. Obviously therefore, a positive change would come to the devotee himself because by constantly dwelling on such good ideas as represented by Lord Ram, his mind and thought processes would be influenced, for it is an old adage that "one becomes in the likeness of the company one keeps". To wit, if we talk about evil things, evil people and evil ideas, if we talk of falsehood, conceit and deceit, our mind, heart and sub-conscience would also turn evil and full of degrading ideas, while if we talk of things that are good, noble, virtuous, auspicious, righteous, things that are truthful and worthy of emulation in our own lives, it would bring about a positive change in us.

Gradually and over time, such a devotee who has undergone transformation by reading and talking about the exemplary character, the auspicious virtues and the noble qualities of Lord Ram would himself become an image of the Lord, and this indirectly means that the Lord would begin to live in his subtle heart.]

चौ०. प्रभु प्रसाद सुचि सुभग सुबासा । सादर जासु लहइ नित नासा ॥ १ ॥

तुम्हहि निबेदित भोजन करहीं । प्रभु प्रसाद पट भूषन धरहीं ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

prabhu prasāda suci subhaga subāsā. sādara jāsū laha'i nita nāsā. 1.
tumhahi nibēdita bhōjana karahīm. prabhu prasāda paṭa bhūṣana dharahīm.

2.

Oh Lord Ram! [Now I shall list other places which are your comfortable abodes.] Live in the thoughts, the mind and the heart of those whose nose find delight in inhaling the fragrance of flowers etc. that are offered to you as a sacred offering made to one's deity during worship¹. (1)

Oh Lord, you should abide in the thoughts, mind and heart of those who eat any kind of food only after offering it to you first, and who accept their clothes and ornaments after first offering them to you, and as a token of your divine grace upon them².* (2)

[Note—¹To wit, a true devotee worships the Lord and offers flowers to him. The fragrance of these flowers cheers up his inner self. The important point to note is that he is not charmed by the fragrance of these flowers while they were in the garden, but once they have been offered to the Lord they assume a divine value for him. So when the fragrance of such flowers reaches his nose, he feels the presence of the Lord near him. Such attitude is one of the forms of Bhakti—where anything seems lovable only when it is associated with the Lord. The flower in the garden or the basket is of no value for a devotee, but once it has been offered to the Lord it becomes a sanctified thing for him.

²To wit, a true devotee would always think that whatever he eats or wears is a gift from the Lord unto him. Whatever they eat and wear are sacred blessings upon them from the Lord. A true devotee is one who offers everything to the Lord, and accepts whatever comes his way, as a gift of the Lord to him. In all sooth, this is an obvious sign of total submission and devotion for the Lord, and it is one of the many ways of practicing Bhakti or devotion for the Lord.

*Verse nos. 1-2 tell us about the 4th place where Lord Ram would abide. Essentially, it is the subtle heart of a person who is a true devotee of the Lord, who is completely devoted to the Lord, and who accepts everything that comes his way in this world as a blessing from the Lord.]

सीस नवहिं सुर गुरु द्विज देखी । प्रीति सहित करि बिनय बिसेषी ॥ ३ ॥

कर नित करहिं राम पद पूजा । राम भरोस हृदयँ नहिं दूजा ॥ ४ ॥

चरन राम तीरथ चलि जाहीं । राम बसहु तिन्ह के मन माहीं ॥ ५ ॥

sīsa navahim sura guru dvija dēkhī. prīti sahita kari binaya bisēṣī. 3.
kara nita karahim rāma pada pūjā. rāma bharōsa hṛdayam' nahim dūjā. 4.
carana rāma tīratha cali jāhīm. rāma basahu tinha kē mana māhīm. 5.

[Oh Lord Ram—] You should dwell in the thoughts, the mind and the heart of those who bow their heads cheerfully and lovingly before their elders (such as Brahmins), teachers (Guru) and Gods when they see them, treating them with great politeness and respect¹. (3)

Similarly oh Lord Ram, you should live in the thoughts, mind and heart of those who worship you daily with their own hands on a regular basis², and who have no faith in their heart on anyone else except you³. (4)

Oh Lord Ram! Live in the thoughts, the mind and the heart (“Mana”) of those who worship your holy feet and regard them as an embodiment of all holy places (pilgrim sites) taken together so much so that by worshipping your holy feet such devotees deem themselves to have gone to all pilgrim places and completed their pilgrimage⁴. (5)

[Note—¹A devotee of Lord Ram, in whose subtle heart the Lord is expected to abide, would be very humble and respectful to others, as he treats everyone as being representatives of the Lord. A true devotee is one who shows respect to his seniors, honours them, shows them esteem and treats them as being representatives of his beloved Lord Ram. This is an extension of the metaphysical view that the Supreme Being has manifested in all the forms that one encounters in one’s daily life. So when one shows respect to one’s elders and teachers and other holy souls, one is actually offering his respect to the Lord. This truly is Bhakti in practice.

With respect to the importance of showing respect to one’s Guru, Gods and Brahmins (i.e. those who are seniors in the society and are learned people), refer to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no.1—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 3; (b) Ayodhya Kand, (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 3; (c) Aranya Kand, (iii) Chaupai line nos. 6 and 9 that precede Doha no. 16; (iv) Doha no. 35; (d) Uttar Kand, (v) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 38; (vi) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 45..

This is the 5th place listed by sage Valmiki where Lord Ram could live—i.e. in the subtle heart of his devotee who shows respect to his Guru, the Gods and Brahmins.

²To wit, one should worship the holy feet of Lord Ram personally, and not by engaging priests. This is another form of Bhakti—to worship the Lord and his holy feet regularly and personally. Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 342; (b) Ayodhya Kand, (ii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 93.

This is the 6th place where Lord Ram lives.

³Another place where Lord Ram should make his abode is the heart of a person who relies solely on Lord Ram, and has firm faith in him. Such a person would seek help and support from no one else but from Lord Ram.

It is a form of true Bhakti wherein a person has total faith in his chosen deity, in our present case Lord Ram, and relies on no one else. Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 130; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 3 that precedes Doha no. 131; (b) Aranya Kand, (iii) Doha no. 16; (iv) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 36; (c) Uttar Kand, (v) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 46; (vi) Sortha no. 87-a. All these verses reiterate the same idea in almost a similar language.

This is the 7th place where Lord Ram would abide.

⁴If a person is completely committed to serve and worship Lord Ram, if he is totally devoted to Lord Ram and has no other deity to whom he owes his allegiance, it is but

natural then that for such a devotee Lord Ram would represent all the Gods in his single person, and by worshipping Lord Ram this devotee would have worshipped all the Gods as well as all the deities of all pilgrim places at once.

Hence, the subtle heart and mind, the thoughts and sub-conscious, the inner-self of such a devotee is surely the 8th divine abode of Lord Ram.]

मंत्रराजु नित जपहिं तुम्हारा । पूजहिं तुम्हहि सहित परिवारा ॥ ६ ॥
तरपन होम करहिं बिधि नाना । बिप्र जेवाँइ देहिं बहु दाना ॥ ७ ॥
तुहु तें अधिक गुरहि जियँ जानी । सकल भायँ सेवहिं सनमानी ॥ ८ ॥

mantrarāju nita japahim tumhārā. pūjahim tumhahi sahita parivārā. 6.
tarapana hōma karahim bidhi nānā. bipra jēvāṁṁ dēhim bahu dānā.
tumha tēm adhika gurahi jiyam̐ jānī. sakala bhāyam̐ sēvahim sanamānī. 4.

Oh Lord, live in the thoughts, mind and heart of those who regularly, consistently and constantly repeat your Holy Name (RAM) which is like a ‘king’ amongst all the Mantras (spiritual formulas), and therefore they worship you with all the members of their family, their kith and kin¹. (6)

Oh Lord Ram! Live in the thoughts, the mind and the heart of those who piously perform fire sacrifices by making offerings and oblations to the Gods and the sacred fire, and who feed Brahmins and make charities in various ways (according to their abilities)². (7)

Oh Lord, live in the thoughts, the mind and the heart of those who give their Guru (moral preceptor; wise spiritual teacher) more regard than they would even to you, and serve them in all possible ways³. (8)

[Note—¹The exemplary glory, as well as the spiritual importance and significance of Lord Ram’s holy name are expounded elaborately in the following Upanishad dedicated to Lord Ram: (a) Ram Rahasya Upanishad, Cantos 2-3, and 5; (b) Ram Purva Tapini Upanishad, Canto 4, verse nos. 1-12, 41-67; (c) Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 1; Canto 2, verse nos. 1-3; Canto 4, verse nos. 14; Canto 5, verse nos. 4/1-47; Canto 6, verse no. 1-6.

In Ram Charit Manas too we have extensive verses that expound upon the great spiritual value of Lord Ram’s holy name, which is in essence his divine Mantra, called the ‘Tarak Mantra’ as it is able to provide a creature liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation. Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 19—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 28; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 46; (b) Aranya Kand, (iii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 36.

This is the 9th place where sage Valmiki advises Lord Ram to live. To wit, the Lord abides permanently in the heart, the mind, the sub-conscious and the thoughts of those who remember the Lord constantly, by way of remembering his holy name every moment of their existence.

²Such persons who follow this advice of sage Valmiki indeed live a religious, pious and holy life, and therefore become pure and holy internally. Offering obeisance to gods and spirits of ancestors, performing fire sacrifices and other religious deeds as prescribed by the scriptures are signs of a holy person. Hence, Lord Ram lives in their hearts, minds and thoughts as a proper and fit place for the Lord to reside. Doing charities in the name of the Lord, and offering oblations to Gods by way of fire sacrifices are meritorious deeds; they are pious and religious activities. But it should be remembered that they bear spiritual rewards only when done selflessly, and as a service to Lord Ram, the Supreme Lord of this world.

The heart, the mind, the thoughts and the inner-self of such a person is deemed to be 10th place where Lord Ram dwells.

³To wit, a Guru should be shown great respect because it is he who shows the devotee the path to God-realisation. Besides this, the Guru is like a living God for the disciple. So honouring and worshipping and serving the Guru are equivalent to doing so for the Lord himself.

In the context of what sage Valmiki prescribes in this verse, refer also to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 129 herein above.

A similar idea is expressed elsewhere also in Ram Charit Manas—apropos: (a) Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 3 (where king Dasrath says that nothing is impossible for a person who worships and reveres his Guru); (b) Aranya Kand, (ii) Doha no. 35 (Lord Ram's advice to Sabari); (c) Uttar Kand, (ii) Doha no. 106-b and Chaupai line no. 5 that follows it (where Lord Shiga says that there is no bigger sin than to cause irreverence to one's Guru).

This verse indicates the 11th place where Lord Ram can live.]

दो०. सबु करि मागहिं एक फलु राम चरन रति होउ ।
तिन्ह कें मन मंदिर बसहु सिय रघुनंदन दोउ ॥ १२९ ॥

dōhā.

sabu kari māgahim̐ ēka phalu rāma carana rati hō'u.
tinha kēm̐ mana mandira basahu siya raghunandana dō'u. 129.

Those who ask for only one reward or fruit for all the meritorious deeds done by them in accordance with the advice given in the scriptures, and this reward or fruit is to have devotion, affection and faith in the holy feet of Lord Ram—verily indeed, such a person's thoughts, mind and heart are like a temple (*mandira*), a consecrated place, where you two brothers (i.e. Lord Ram and Laxman) and Sita can live comfortably¹. (Doha no. 129)

[Note—¹The word used in the text is “*mandira*”, and it has a dual meaning—it can mean a ‘temple’ where an image of the Lord God is consecrated, as well as a ‘home’ or a ‘dwelling place’ where any person would reside permanently. To wit, if a person's heart, mind, thoughts and inner-self are purified and made holy by practicing any of the methods listed by sage Valmiki here in his advice given to Lord Ram, then for all practical purposes the person's entire physical being becomes a symbolic structure of a sacred ‘temple’, because in the sanctum sanctorum of this temple, i.e. in the person's heart, mind, thoughts and sub-conscious, Lord Ram dwells permanently

just as the Lord's image is consecrated inside the sanctum sanctorum of a formal temple.

The effect would be that such a holy and pious soul (read 'a person') would be identified as being an image of Lord Ram much like a 'temple' is known as 'Lord Ram's temple' because it has a consecrated image of the Lord inside its sanctum sanctorum.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 207 where sage Bharadwaj tells Bharat that having affection and devotion for the holy feet of Lord Ram is the root of all auspiciousness in this world; it is a harbinger of all good fortunes and the culmination of all meritorious deeds.

The sage also reiterates by citing the instance of Bharat that a person who has true devotion for Lord Ram and loves the Lord is a living image of Lord Ram himself—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 208. This idea fits in perfectly with our own observation made here—that a person who has the stellar qualities as enumerated by sage Valmiki becomes a habitat of Lord Ram, and just like a home is known after the name of the person who lives in it, such a person in whose heart, mind, thoughts and sub-conscience Lord Ram lives indeed becomes an image of the Lord for all practical purposes.

The subtle idea in this Doha is that a person who offers all his meritorious deeds to Lord Ram, and who seeks nothing but affection and devotion for Lord Ram for all his religious and spiritual efforts—the heart, the mind, the thoughts and the inner-self of such people is an abode of Lord Ram.

Refer to Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 95, and (ii) Chaupai line no.1 that precedes Doha no. 96 where sage Kaagbhusund has emphatically reiterated this fact.

This is the 12th place where Lord Ram would live.]

चौ०. काम कोह मद मान न मोहा । लोभ न छोभ न राग न द्रोहा ॥ १ ॥

जिन्ह के कपट दंभ नहिं माया । तिन्ह के हृदय बसहु रघुराया ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kāma kōha mada māna na mōhā. lōbha na chōbha na rāga na drōhā. 1.
jinha kēm kapaṭa dambha nahiṁ māyā. tinha kēm hr̥daya basahu raghurāyā.
2.

Oh Lord Ram! Stay in the pious and purified heart of those who are free from the negativities and spiritual darkness associated with such demeaning qualities as lust and passion (kāma), anger and wrathfulness (kōha), arrogance and haughtiness (mada), pride and ego (māna), delusions that result from ignorance (na mōhā), greed and rapacity (lōbha na), grief, regrets and sorrows (chōbha na), or any sort of attraction or aversion for anything or anyone (because they have exemplary equanimity and uniformity of thought; they have no trace of infatuation, longing and attachment with anything or anyone in this world on the one hand, nor enmity, ill-will, malice and hatred on the other hand—rāga na drōhā)¹. (1)

Similarly oh Lord, you should live in the heart of those who are free from fraud, conceit, deceit, pretensions and hypocrisy (*jinha kēm kapaṭa dambha nahim*), and delusions of all kinds (*nahim māyā*).² (2)

[Note—¹Vibhishan has given a similar advice to the demon king Ravana—that he must give Sita back to Lord Ram as it is a grave sin to cast an evil eye on someone else's wife—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 38.

²Obviously, persons who have these eclectic spiritual virtues would be peaceful at heart and calm in their mind. They are pious and holy by their very nature. They would have equanimity in their behaviour and thought, and would remain unruffled even during the greatest of adversities. Nothing moves them, nothing disturbs them, and all circumstances, whether favourable or unfavourable, are the same for them.

Absence of the above-listed evil characters and tainting qualities will be displayed only by those who have attained a certain higher plane of wisdom and knowledge, and have realized what it means to become an ideal human being.

To be sure, for all practical purposes therefore, once a person becomes free of these negative traits, he would indeed become holy and purified, and hence a living image of Lord Ram

Lord Ram is asked to live in the heart of such exalted souls who are exemplarily tranquil and composed. These are the qualities of saints, and they come automatically when one practices purity of devotion for Lord Ram, known as 'Bhakti'.

In the context of what has been said in these two verses, refer also to: Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Aranya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 12 that precedes Doha no. 16 (Lord Ram's advice to Laxman); (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 36 (Lord Ram's advice to Sabari); (b) Uttar Kand, (iii) Doha no. 38 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it (Lord Ram's advice to Hanuman, Bharat etc.; and (iv) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 70—to Doha no. 71 (sage Kaagbhusund outlines these same evils and says they can be overcome by the grace of Lord Ram).

These two verses indicate the 13th place where Lord Ram would dwell.]

सब के प्रिय सब के हितकारी । दुख सुख सरिस प्रसंसा गारी ॥ ३ ॥

कहहिं सत्य प्रिय बचन बिचारी । जागत सोवत सरन तुम्हारी ॥ ४ ॥

तुम्हहि छाड़ि गति दूसरि नाहीं । राम बसहु तिन्ह के मन माहीं ॥ ५ ॥

saba kē priya saba kē hitakārī. dukha sukha sarisa prasansā gārī. 3.
kahahim satya priya bacana bicārī. jāgata sōvata sarana tumhārī. 4.
tumhahi chāḍi gati dūsari nāhīm. rāma basahu tinha kē mana māhīm. 5.

Again, oh Lord Ram, dwell in the heart of those who are friendly and amiable towards all, who are the beloved benefactor for others¹, who have exemplary virtue of equanimity so much so that they remain unruffled and unmoved during opposite situations of sorrows on one hand and joys on the other, and who treat abuse and applause equally (without getting perturbed and offended by them at all)². (3)

Similarly oh Lord, those who scrupulously speak the truth and always use polite words³, who have surrendered themselves before you during all moments of their lives, whether they are awake or asleep⁴—you should abide in the heart, the mind, the thoughts and the sub-conscious of such people. (4)

Those for whom you are the only means of solace and succour, the only hope and assurance, and the only spiritual destination and goal of their lives—verily indeed, oh Lord Ram, you must abide in their thoughts, mind and heart⁵. (5)

[Note—¹Such people are true saints, and therefore they are an image of Lord Ram who lives in their inner-self, in their hearts, minds, thoughts and sub-conscious.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 38; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 41.

This is the 14th place for Lord Ram to live.

²These are some of the other characters of saints and true devotees of the Lord. In this context, refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6, 8 that precede Doha no. 38.

This is the 15th place for Lord Ram to dwell.

³This is the stellar quality of a true devotee of Lord Ram; even the Lord has himself affirmed it—that he would always speak the truth, but in such a way that it does not offend any person. In the context of this virtue, refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Aranya Kand, (iii) Doha no. 16; (iv) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 36; (c) Uttar Kand, (v) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 46; (vi) Doha no. 87 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it.

This is the 16th place for Lord Ram to abide.

⁴This verse tells us that the heart, the mind, the thoughts, the sub-conscious, and the inner-self of a person who has taken refuge with Lord Ram and seek the Lord's shelter at all moments of life, whether the person is awake or asleep, is the 17th abode of Lord Ram.

⁵This verse is an extension of, or we can say it compliments and supplements the idea expressed by Valmiki in the following verses: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 129; (ii) Doha no. 130; (iii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 131.

Hence, we shall skip assigning any specific number to this abode of Lord Ram.]

जननी सम जानहिं परनारी । धनु पराव बिष तें बिष भारी ॥ ६ ॥

जे हरषहिं पर संपति देखी । दुखित होहिं पर बिपति बिसेषी ॥ ७ ॥

जिन्हहि राम तुम्ह प्रानपिआरे । तिन्ह के मन सुभ सदन तुम्हारे ॥ ८ ॥

jananī sama jānahiṁ paranārī. dhanu parāva biṣa tēṁ biṣa bhārī. 6.

jē haraṣahīṁ para sampati dēkhī. dukhita hōhiṁ para bipati bisēṣī. 7.

jinhahi rāma tumha prānapi'ārē. tinha kē mana subha sadana tumhārē. 8.

Oh Lord, you should live in the heart of those who treat all women folk (literally, another person's wife—"paranārī") with due respect and dignity as they would treat their own mother¹, and who regard the wealth of others as the deadliest of poisons (i.e. who do not covet the wealth of any person)². (6)

Those who feel glad at the prosperity and happiness of others, and feel sad and sorry at their distress, pain and agony (are the ones in whose 'Mana', i.e. in their inner-self, in their subtle heart and mind, in their thoughts and sub-conscious, Lord Ram should dwell)³. (7)

And oh Lord, those who love you as dearly as they love their own lives—verily indeed, the thought, the mind and the heart of such persons are an auspicious place for you to stay in⁴. (8)

[Note—¹Vibhishan has given a similar advice to the demon king Ravana—that he must give Sita back to Lord Ram as it is a grave sin to cast an evil eye on someone else's wife—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 38; Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 39; and Doha no. 40.

In the kingdom ruled in accordance with the laws of Dharma as laid down by the scriptures Lord Ram, everyone followed the principle as mentioned in this verse—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 22.

This is the 18th place where Lord Ram should live.

²Lord Ram has hinted at these noble characters but from a different angle. While listing the evil characteristics of non-saints and evil persons, the Lord says that such persons are always envious of wealth of others they are jealous of other people's prosperity and wealth—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 39 along with Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes it.

This is the 19th place where Lord Ram should abide.

³Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 38.

An opposite character is found in evil persons—for they feel elated and rejoice as if they have been made the king of the world when they find or see some kind of fault in others—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 40.

This is the 20th place where Lord Ram should dwell.

⁴Refer also to the following verses of Valmiki's advice which would mean the same thing as said in this verse: (i) Doha no. 130; (ii) Doha no. 131 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede it.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 62 (Lord Shiva's observation); (ii) Doha no. 130-b (Tulsidas' wish).

This is the 21st place which is Lord Ram's habitat.]

दो०. स्वामि सखा पितु मातु गुर जिन्ह के सब तुम्ह तात ।
मन मंदिर तिन्ह के बसहु सीय सहित दोउ भ्रात ॥ १३० ॥

dōhā.

svāmi sakhā pitu mātu gura jinha kē saba tumha tāta.
mana mandira tinha kēm basahu sīya sahita dō'u bhrāta. 130.

Oh Lord Ram! Stay in the 'temple' symbolized by the Mana (the mind-and-heart complex, which comprises thoughts, emotions, sub-conscious and the inner-self) of those for whom you are the only Lord, friend, father, mother, teacher (svāmi sakhā pitu mātu gura) in their lives—i.e. for whom you are the only relation that matters in this world, for whom you are the dearest of kin, the most gracious benefactor, the wisest of guide, and the only sustainer and protector in this world¹. (Doha no. 130)

[Note—¹To wit, those for whom the only Lord, the only friend, the only companion, the only guide and the only kith and kin is Lord Ram, who know no one else except Lord Ram—it is in their temple-like mind and heart that Lord Ram lives.

These are the qualities of a true Bhakta and a vivid manifestation of Bhakti. Only those who have devotion, love and faith in Lord Ram—or 'Bhakti for Lord Ram'—would ever think in this way.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Aranya Kand, (i) Doha no. 16; (b) Uttar Kand, (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 38; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 47.

We shall read by-and-by that Bharat has expressed a similar idea during the conference at Chitrakoot, but he has elaborated further on this principle—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 298.

This is the 22nd abode of Lord Ram.]

चौ०. अवगुन तजि सब के गुन गहहीं । बिप्र धेनु हित संकट सहहीं ॥ १ ॥
नीति निपुन जिन्ह कइ जग लीका । घर तुम्हार तिन्ह कर मनु नीका ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

avaguna taji saba kē guna gahahīm. bipra dhēnu hita saṅkaṭa sahaḥīm. 1.
nīti nipuna jinha ka'i jaga līkā. ghara tumhāra tinha kara manu nīkā. 2.

Those who discard other's faults and pick up their goodness and virtues¹, those who suffer for the cause of the wise ones and all humble creatures (here represented by the cows)² (1), ---

---And those who are well-versed in the laws of proper conduct, propriety, ethics and righteousness, follow these laws in all earnest, thereby becoming an epitome of these virtues in this world³—oh Lord Ram, verily indeed, you have a good home (ghara tumhāra) in the mind and heart (i.e. the Mana, which also includes thoughts, emotions, sub-conscious and the inner-self) of such noble and enlightened persons, and therefore you should abide there. [To wit, those who possess these characters are the ones in whose inner-self you can comfortably live.] * (2)

[Note—¹The heart, the mind, the thoughts and the sub-conscious of a person would be purified and freed from all corruptions and evil ideas if he has trained himself to look only at the goodness of others and discard their negative traits. Surely then, Lord Ram would have no hesitation in living here. Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 36.

An evil person has an opposite character as stated in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 39, and Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 40.

This is the 23rd dwelling place of Lord Ram.

²By contrast, an evil person would do just the opposite as was the case with the demons—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 183. Refer also to Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 40 where this evil character of non-saints is mentioned.

To wit, a person who suffers hardships himself so that the interest of others, such as learned and pious people represented by Brahmins, and humble creatures represented by cows, is served and looked after, such people become eligible to welcome Lord Ram to come and stay in their inner-self, in their subtle heart and mind.

This is the 24th place for Lord Ram to live.

³Such wise and enlightened persons are truly pure and holy, because they can easily distinguish between good and evil, and therefore they are eligible to become a habitat of Lord Ram as they would surely choose the good and discard the evil.

In this context, refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 38.

The people in the kingdom of Lord Ram lived in conformity of this principle—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Doha no. 20; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 2-3, 7-8 that precede Doha no. 21.

This is the 25th abode of Lord Ram.

*Once again, a true devotee of Lord Ram would have these excellent qualities. So they are manifestations of Bhakti. To wit, when one has devotion for Lord Ram and loves the Lord, i.e. when one practices Bhakti and is therefore a Bhakta of the Lord, he would have the excellent characters mentioned in these and other verses.]

गुन तुम्हार समुझइ निज दोसा । जेहि सब भाँति तुम्हार भरोसा ॥ ३ ॥
राम भगत प्रिय लागहिं जेही । तेहि उर बसहु सहित बैदेही ॥ ४ ॥

guna tumhāra samujha'i nija dōsā. jēhi saba bhām̐ti tumhāra bharōsā. 3.
rāma bhagata priya lāgahīṁ jēhī. tēhi ura basahu sahita baidēhī. 4.

Those who attribute all good and meritorious deeds done by them as being done due to your grace, and hold themselves responsible for all the faults they have (i.e. who do not feel proud of good deeds done by them, and instead remain humble and unpretentious)¹, who have you as their only support and succour and reliance in this world (i.e. who rely only upon you for all their needs, whether such needs pertain to

matters of mundane life or those related to their spiritual welfare, and they ask you in their prayers to help them)² (3), ---

---And who love those who are your devotees (i.e. who feel a sense of kinship with those who are your Bhaktas and who practice Bhakti for you)³—oh Lord Ram, you and Sita (your consort) should stay in the subtle heart (ura) of such persons. (4)

[Note—¹In this context, we can refer to Tulsidas' books (a) "Dohawali", verse no. 88; and (b) "Vinai Patrika", verse no. 102.

This is the 26th place for Lord Ram to live.

²A similar idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, (a) Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 129 (2nd half); (b) Aranya Kand, (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 36; (b) Uttar Kand, (iii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 46.

Since this virtue repeats what has already been said in the 2nd half of verse no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 129 earlier, we can safely skip assigning any new numbering to this virtue.

³Lord Ram has himself asserted the importance of this virtue in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha nos. 85 and 87.

This virtue represents the 27th abode of Lord Ram.]

जाति पाँति धनु धरमु बड़ाई । प्रिय परिवार सदन सुखदाई ॥ ५ ॥

सब तजि तुम्हहि रहइ उर लाई । तेहि के हृदयँ रहहु रघुराई ॥ ६ ॥

jāti pām̐ti dhanu dharamu baṛā'ī. priya parivāra sadana sukhadā'ī. 5.
saba taji tumhahi raha'i ura lā'ī. tēhi kē hṛdayam̐ rahahu raghura'ī. 6.

Further, oh Lord Ram, dwell in the heart of those who abandon all worldly relationships, who renounce all sorts of associations pertaining to this world and expectations from it, such as those related to one's caste, clan, wealth, religious obligations, honour and fame, family, kith and kin, duties of the household, and desire for comfort that the gross body demands from them. (5)

Instead of allowing their minds to be occupied by the thoughts of these things and allowing these things to occupy their heart by being infatuated with them, they (i.e. your true devotees) embrace you with all sincerity, filling their mind with your thoughts and enshrining you in their heart with the greatest of reverence (like one consecrates a deity in a shrine).¹ (6)

[Note—¹To wit, Lord Ram abides in the mind and heart of those who have severed all worldly relationships and have determined that the Lord is their only kith and kin. They have cleansed their inner-self, they have removed all clutter from their mind and heart, and then they have respectfully and lovingly welcomed Lord Ram and invited him to come and abide in this shrine. They abandon all other thoughts, and focus their mind and attention solely on Lord Ram. Surely enough, this is one of the best ways of practicing Bhakti.

“Oh Lord, you should reside in the heart of such persons who have preferred or opted to keep you close to their heart and give you an exclusive place in it to reside by vacating all other worldly relationships and attachments from it. Therefore, they discard all desires from their hearts to make way for you. Hence, they pay no heed to whether or not they are adhering to the edicts and requirements of caste, creed and religion; they eliminate all longings for wealth and prosperity from their hearts; they remove the desire for following the principles of Dharma (laws of righteousness, propriety, probity, good and moral conduct and thoughts) so as to obtain welfare and happiness in this world; they abandon the natural attachment of the heart towards one's family, kith and kin, compatriots and friends, as well as homestead. Nothing concerns them any more once they have decided to clean the inner chambers of their heart and make place for you. They treat the rest of the world and anything related with it, including all material things and relationships, as redundant and as useless as garbage that must be thrown out to clean one's inner self so that the one who is most dear to the person can be welcomed with open arms and given a neat and honourably place to stay in.”

These two verses tell us the 28th place where Lord Ram abides.]

सरगु नरकु अपबरगु समाना । जहँ तहँ देख धरें धनु बाना ॥ ७ ॥
करम बचन मन राउर चेरा । राम करहु तेहि कें उर डेरा ॥ ८ ॥

saragu naraku apabaragu samānā. jaham̐ taham̐ dēkha dharēm̐ dhanu bānā.
7.

karama bacana mana rā'ura cērā. rāma karahu tēhi kēm̐ ura ḍērā. 8.

Oh Lord Ram! Make a dwelling in the heart of those for whom heaven and hell, as well as freedom from the cycle of birth and death are the same in as much as they behold you holding a bow and arrow here, there and everywhere else¹. (7)

Oh Lord Ram! Live in the heart of those who are truly devoted to you, who are like your loyal and faithful servants by their action, deed, thought and speech (karama bacana mana rā'ura cērā)². (8)

[Note—¹To wit, they feel your divine presence everywhere in this world. They are aware of the truth that you are the all-pervading and omnipresent Supreme Lord of the world. So it does not matter to them whether they live in heaven or in hell, whether they die or live—because they feel your presence everywhere around them, they know that you are always available to them to give your love and protection to them.

This is the 29th abode of Lord Ram.

²To wit, Bhakti requires that whatever the devotee does, whatever he thinks, whatever he says—everything is related to the Lord God. For him, there is nothing to do, nothing to think about, and nothing to talk about except the Lord.

This is the 30th dwelling place for Lord Ram.]

दो०. जाहि न चाहिअ कबहुँ कछु तुम्ह सन सहज सनेहु ।

बसहु निरंतर तासु मन सो राउर निज गेहु ॥ १३१ ॥

dōhā.

jāhi na cāhi'a kabahum' kachu tumha sana sahaja sanēhu.
basahu nirantara tāsū mana sō rā'ura nija gēhu. 131.

And finally oh Lord Ram, reside permanently in the thought, the mind and the heart of those who have no desire whatsoever in this world, but instead they have a natural affinity for you, their inherent love and affection for you forms an integral part of their entire being, and who love you deeply and unconditionally.

Oh Lord Ram! Such a person's holy and uncorrupt mind and heart are deemed to be your own natural dwelling place¹. (Doha no. 131)

[Note—¹In this context, refer to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Aranya Kand, (i) Doha no. 16; (b) Uttar Kand, (ii) Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 96; (iii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 110.

We read in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 137 that “Lord Ram likes only one virtue in a person, and that is the glorious virtue of having affection and love” for the Lord in the person's heart.

Verily, this is the 31st abode where Lord Ram abides.]

चौ०. एहि बिधि मुनिबर भवन देखाए । बचन सप्रेम राम मन भाए ॥ १ ॥

कह मुनि सुनहु भानुकुलनायक । आश्रम कहउँ समय सुखदायक ॥ २ ॥

चित्रकूट गिरि करहु निवासू । तहँ तुम्हार सब भाँति सुपासू ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

ēhi bidhi munibara bhavana dēkhā'ē. bacana saprēma rāma mana bhā'ē. 1.
kaha muni sunahu bhānukulanāyaka. āśrama kaha'um' samaya sukhadāyaka. 2.

citrakūṭa giri karahu nivāsū. taham' tumhāra saba bhāmṭi supāsū. 3.

In the aforesaid manner, sage Valmiki showed Lord Ram the symbolic holy abodes where the Lord can dwell in a subtle form¹.

The affectionate words of the sage were very pleasing for Lord Ram, and the Lord was gladdened in his Mana (hear and mind). (1)

[Having enumerated the qualities of the symbolic sacred places where Lord Ram, the personified form of the Supreme Being and the cosmic Consciousness, can live eternally in a subtle form, making the Lord easily accessible to his devotees, saints and pious souls, the sage now tells the Lord the place in this physical world where he should go and abide for some time during the course of his mission for which the Lord had descended upon earth in the form of a human being and underwent hardships associated with this kind of life, even to the extent of enduring all sorts of sufferings associated with life in the forest.]

The sage said: ‘Oh Lord of the Solar Race (bhānukulanāyaka), now please listen to me. I wilst now tell thee a place which shalt be thine retreat for some time now onwards (before thou decide to move on). (2)

Make the hills of Chitrakoot as thine abode, for this place (surrounded by natural beauty) is a pleasure to dwell in, and it wilst give thee a lot of comfort². (3)

[Note—¹These symbolic dwellings of Lord Ram have been enumerated by the illustrious sage from Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 128—to Doha no. 131 herein above. In these aforesaid verses, sage Valmiki lists the stellar qualities that a person must possess in order to qualify or become eligible to be selected by Lord Ram to make the person’s heart, mind, thoughts and sub-conscious, i.e. the person’s inner-self, as the Lord’s sacred abode, in the same way as a sacred image of the Lord is consecrated in his shrine. When this comes to happen, this fortunate person would become an image of Lord Ram for the simple reason that he embodies and practices all the glorious, noble and excellent qualities that characterize Lord Ram’s devotees and saints, who are representatives of the Lord himself in this world.

²The beautiful environment of Chitrakoot and its glories have been described in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 133 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 137—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 139.

Refer also to Tulsidas’ other books, such as: (a) Vinai Patrika, verse nos. 23-24; (b) Geetawali Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, verse nos. 43-50; (c) Kavitawali Ramayan, Uttar Kand, verse nos. 141-143.

We shall shortly be reading about Chitrakoot in detail in the verses that follow herein below.]

सैलु सुहावन कानन चारू । करि केहरि मृग बिहग बिहारू ॥ ४ ॥
नदी पुनीत पुरान बखानी । अत्रिप्रिया निज तपबल आनी ॥ ५ ॥
सुरसरि धार नाउँ मंदाकिनि । जो सब पातक पोतक डाकिनि ॥ ६ ॥

sailu suhāvana kānana cārū. kari kēhari mṛga bihaga bihārū. 4.
nadī punīta purāna bakhānī. atripriyā nija tapabala ānī. 5.
surasari dhāra nā’um̐ mandākini. jō saba pātaka pōtaka dākini. 6.

The undulating hills that surround it (Chitrakoot) are very beautiful, and so are the surrounding verdant forests that are extraordinarily charming. They are the natural habitats of elephants, lions, deer and other kind of wild animals, as well as the natural playground of birds of various species that freely frolic around. (4)

There is a holy river at that place, the glories of which have been described in the Purans (ancient histories)¹, and which came into existence by the grace of the wife of sage Atri (i.e. Anusuiya)² whose Tapa (penance and austerities) made it possible. (5)

This sacred river is called ‘Mandakini’, and is a tributary of the holy river Ganges³. For all practical purposes, it is like a witch that kills children for this river is capable

of destroying one's sins (if one takes a bath in it, just like is the case with the holy river Ganges that too destroys all sins of a person who bathes in its waters). (6)

[Note—¹The glories of Mandakini are briefly referred to in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 138.

²We shall read about sage Atri and his wife Anusuiya in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 3—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 7.

³The story of how this holy river Mandakini came into existence by the grace of Anusuiya is briefly as follows:-

Once upon a time there was a severe drought, leading to famine and mass sufferings. Sage Atri felt very sad at this development, and moved by the plight of the world he decided to do Tapa (penance and austerity) in order to alleviate the suffering of all the creatures. In this state, the sage entered into a trance, known as Samadhi, and remained unmoving. His wife Anusuiya was constantly by his side to serve him and take care of him as best as she could. She discarded all food and drink just like her husband had done as he entered into the trance-like state during Tapa.

Highly impressed by the noble cause for which the couple were enduring such hardships and doing Tapa, the Gods, great Sages and the holy river Ganges came to visit them and see their pious efforts. While everyone else paid their obeisance and went their ways, Ganges and Lord Shiva stayed back. The deity representing river Ganges was especially very impressed by Anusuiya's pious nature, noble heart and her devotion to her husband sage Atri, and so the deity thought to herself that if she could in some way help this pious and holy lady it would be a very good deed that she (river Ganges) would be doing.

After a long period of 54 years, sage Atri woke up from his meditative state (i.e. from Samadhi), and asked his wife, Anusuiya, to give him some water to drink. Anusuiya took the sage's water-pot and went out in search of water, wondering from where to fetch some water for the sage. {Remember: there was a prolonged drought.}

The deity of river Ganges decided that it was the most appropriate time to help Anusuiya. So, she revealed herself in a physical form before the hermitress and told her that she (Ganges) was very pleased by her penances and austerities, and wished to know how she could be helped. Anusuiya asked for some water, at which the personified form of the deity of river Ganges asked the hermitress to dig a small pit in the ground. When it was done, the deity entered it, and transformed herself into water.

Anusuiya filled her pot with that water and requested the deity to remain there till she goes and gives the water to sage Atri, and then bring him to that place. When sage Atri drank this water, he was astonished by its nectarine qualities, sweet, cool and rejuvenating. When asked, Anusuiya told Atri everything. The sage then came to visit the sacred spot where the holy river Ganges had revealed herself.

Seeing the hole from where Anusuiya had fetched water for him, sage Atri recognized it was river Ganges; he paid his obeisance to the holy river and asked the latter not to leave that place, and stay there forever. River Ganges replied that if the sage would offer the good effects of his doing worship of Lord Shiva and goddess Parvati (Shiva's consort) for merely one year to river Ganges in exchange of her living there, she would oblige him. The sage agreed. And in this way, river Ganges came to be present in that spot for all times to come, and became known as 'Mandakini'. This episode also shows the stupendous spiritual rewards one gets by

worshipping Lord Shiva and goddess Parvati in as much as merely one year's rewards compelled river Ganges to stay put and entitled her to purify a place which had never seen water before. {This story is narrated in Shiva Puran, Canto 4, in its Rudra Sanhita.}

It is obvious from the above narration that sage Atri's hermitage was located in the vicinity of where river Mandakini sprouted on earth. This will be clear in the next verse no. 7 herein below.]

अत्रि आदि मुनिबर बहु बसहीं । करहिं जोग जप तप तन कसहीं ॥ ७ ॥

चलहु सफल श्रम सब कर करहू । राम देहु गौरव गिरिबरहू ॥ ८ ॥

atri ādi munibara bahu basahīm. karahīm jōga japa tapa tana kasahīm. 7.
calahu saphala śrama saba kara karahū. rāma dēhu gaurava giribarahū. 8.

Great sages such as Atri and others live there (i.e. in Chitrakoot); they endure great physical hardships and become emaciated in their bodies (tana kasahīm) by doing prolonged meditation and contemplation, spending long time in repeating holy mantras, engaging themselves in undertaking severe penances, and observing strict austerities (jōga japa tapa). (7)

Oh Lord, you must go there¹ so that you may bless them all, and make all their efforts and spiritual endeavours successful, and at the same time grant great honour to the surrounding hills (of Chitrakoot) by your holy presence in their midst.' (8)

[Note—¹The word used in the text is “calahu”—which also means ‘let us go’. It implies that sage Valmiki himself got up and accompanied Lord Ram to the vicinity of Chitrakoot.

This is clearly mentioned in Veda Vyas' “Adhyatma Ramayan”, Ayodhya Kand, Canto , verse nos. 89-91 where we read that “sage Valmiki took along many of his disciples and accompanied Lord Ram and Laxman to a place lying in the valley of great mountains (hills) where river Ganges (i.e. its tributary, the Mandakini) was present. There, Valmiki got a small thatched hut having two rooms erected for Lord Ram's stay with the help of the disciples who had gone with him. Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman would live peacefully for some time in this dwelling.

However, in our present book ‘Ram Charit Manas’, a different version is given. According to what we shall read here, the Gods had themselves assumed the form of tribals living in the hills, and they had come to erect the 2-room thatched dwelling for Lord Ram in Chitrakoot—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 133 herein below.]

दो०. चित्रकूट महिमा अमित कही महामुनि गाइ ।

आइ नहाए सरित बर सिय समेत दोउ भाइ ॥ १३२ ॥

dōhā.

citrakūṭa mahimā amita kahī mahāmuni gā'i.
ā'i nahā'ē sarita bara siya samēta dō'u bhā'i. 132.

The greatness of Chitrakoot and its manifold glories were narrated by sage Valmiki.

Thereafter, the two brothers (i.e. Lord Ram and Laxman) along with Sita came there and took a bath in the holy river (Mandakini). (Doha no. 132)

[Note—The beauty and greatness of Chitrakoot has been described in: (a) Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 133 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 137—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 139; (b) Vinai Patrika, verse nos. 23-24; (c) Geetawali Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, verse nos. 43-50; and (d) Kavitawali Ramayan, Uttar Kand, verse nos. 141-143.]

चौ०. रघुबर कहेउ लखन भल घाटू । करहु कतहुँ अब ठाहर ठाटू ॥ १ ॥

लखन दीख पय उतर करारा । चहुँ दिसि फिरेउ धनुष जिमि नारा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

raghubara kahē'u lakhana bhala ghāṭū. karahu katahum'aba ṭhāhara ṭhāṭū. 1. lakhana dīkha paya utara karārā. cahum'disi phirē'u dhanuṣa jimi nārā. 2.

As advised by sage Valmiki, Lord Ram reached the banks of river Mandakini, and found to his joy that they (river's banks) were very pleasant and charming. So, the Lord told Laxman: 'Oh Laxman, we see that the banks of the river, and the steps that descend to the water, are clean and very pleasant. Hence, find a suitable spot near about where we can arrange to put up our dwelling.

[It will give us access to clean water, and since its surroundings are pleasant and in a serene area that is nestled amongst the chain of undulating hills and in the midst of verdant forests, it will also afford us peace and tranquility.]' (1)

On the instructions of the Lord, Laxman surveyed the area and looked towards the northern banks of the river, where he descried a stream or a rivulet that was in the shape of a stretched half circle encircling the northern bank of the aforesaid river, with its ends touching two farthest ends of the river on either side, resembling a bent bow whose string has been pulled tight¹. (2)

[Note—¹This stream or rivulet is also known as "Payaswani" which means 'as pure and white as the cow's milk'. Earlier we have read that sage Valmiki has lavishly praised river Mandakini*, and had asked Lord Ram to go and dwell near it. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 132.}

So, it is obvious that Lord Ram reached the banks of river Mandakini on whose northern banks Laxman saw a stream or rivulet in the form of a semi-circle, with its two ends touching river Mandakini at two points, giving the impression that this rivulet was like a bent bow, while the river Mandakini resembled the string of that bow as it was flowing straight.]

नदी पनच सर सम दम दाना । सकल कलुष कलि साउज नाना ॥ ३ ॥

चित्रकूट जनु अचल अहेरी । चुकड़ न घात मार मुठभेरी ॥ ४ ॥

nadī panaca sara sama dama dānā. sakala kaluṣa kali sā'uja nānā. 3.
citrakūṭa janu acala ahērī. cuka'i na ghāta māra muṭhabhērī. 4.

The river (Mandakini) was like the string of this bow (as visualised in verse no. 2 herein above), and the excellent virtues of 'Sama-Dama-Daan' (equanimity, self-control over senses, and charity respectively) are like the arrow mounted over this bow.

This symbolic bow aims its arrows at all the evil qualities and vices that are prevalent in the present corrupt era known as Kaliyug¹. (3)

Verily indeed, Chitrakoot is like a hunter who never misses his shot, and anyone who dares to confront it is bound to be destroyed². (4)

[Note—¹To wit, if a person practices these three eclectic virtues of Sama, Dama and Daan, i.e. if he practices equanimity, self-restraint, and charity, then he would be able to neutralize the negative effects of Kaliyug.

²In this imagery, Chitrakoot is likened to a hunter; river Mandakini to the string of the bow that the hunter uses to kill his prey; the stream that forms a semi-circle or an arch around the northern flank of the river is like the bent bow itself, and the three virtues of Sama, Dama and Daan are like the invincible arrows mounted on this metaphoric bow.

The idea is that this place is very holy, and it empowers a devotee to attain purity of mind, heart and thoughts by overcoming all the taints of character associated with Kaliyug. If a person practices the three qualities mentioned here, viz. Sama, Dama and Daan, it would be easy for the person to eliminate all sorts of taints characteristic of Kaliyug.]

अस कहि लखन ठाउँ देखरावा । थलु बिलोकि रघुबर सुखु पावा ॥ ५ ॥

रमेउ राम मनु देवन्ह जाना । चले सहित सुर थपति प्रधाना ॥ ६ ॥

asa kahi lakhana ṭhā'um' dēkharāvā. thalu bilōki raghubara sukhu pāvā. 5.
ramē'u rāma manu dēvanha jānā. calē sahita sura thapati pradhānā. 6.

Saying this and making the above observation, Laxman pointed out to Lord Ram the spot where they can live. The most exalted Lord of the Raghus ("raghubara"; Lord Ram) felt glad when he looked at the spot selected by Laxman. (5)

When the gods found that the spot has been liked by Lord Ram (who was enamoured by its beauty and impressed by its spiritual value), all of them started for that place, and took along with them the chief architect of the heaven (i.e. Vishwakarma)¹ whom they made a vanguard of the group. (6)

[Note—¹The gods wanted to erect a comfortable habitat for Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman. So they took their architect and builder along when they came to the place in

Chitrakoot which Lord Ram had selected to make his temporary abode. This will be clear in the two verses that follow herein below.]

कोल किरात बेष सब आए । रचे परन तृन सदन सुहाए ॥ ७ ॥
बरनि न जाहिं मंजु दुइ साला । एक ललित लघु एक बिसाला ॥ ८ ॥

kōla kirāta bēṣa saba ā'ē. racē parana tṛna sadana suhā'ē. 7.
barani na jāhiṁ manju du'i sālā. ēka lalita laghu ēka bisālā. 8.

The gods assumed the forms of tribals known as Kole and Kiraat, and constructed a pleasant thatched dwelling made of leaves and twigs (for the Lord to stay in). (7)

This dwelling had two comfortable and pleasant rooms or chambers, of which one was large and the other small in size¹. (8)

[Note—¹There are many reasons why two rooms or chambers were constructed in the dwelling. One was meant for residence of Lord Ram and Sita, while the other was meant for Laxman. The other reason is that the main chamber, the bigger one, would serve as the private room for Lord Ram and Sita, while the smaller one would have dual purpose—during the night it would be used by Laxman, and during the day time it would serve as a room to seat guests of the Lord, such as the sages who came to visit him.]

दो०. लखन जानकी सहित प्रभु राजत रुचिर निकेत ।
सोह मदनु मुनि बेष जनु रति रितुराज समेत ॥ १३३ ॥
dōhā.

lakhana jānakī sahita prabhu rājata rucira nikēta.
sōha madanu muni bēṣa janu rati riturāja samēta. 133.

In this beautiful dwelling lived Lord Ram with Sita and Laxman, and it appeared that Kamdeo himself resided there along with his consort Rati, and the Spring season, which was his best companion¹. (Doha no. 133)

[Note—¹In this metaphor, Lord Ram is the 'Kamdeo', the deity of love and beauty; Sita is Rati, the wife of Kamdeo; and Laxman is the 'Spring season' which is regarded as the best friend of Kamdeo as it gladdens the heart of the latter like no other season would.]

[PAUSE 17 FOR A THIRTY-DAY RECITATION]

चौ०. अमर नाग किंनर दिसिपाला । चित्रकूट आए तेहि काला ॥ १ ॥
राम प्रनामु कीन्ह सब काहू । मुदित देव लहि लोचन लाहू ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

amara nāga kinnara disipālā. citrakūṭa ā'ē tēhi kālā. 1.

rāma pranāmu kīnha saba kāhū. mudita dēva lahi lōcana lāhū. 2.

The immortal Gods, the Nagas (Lords of the subterranean world), the Kinnars (semi-gods who live in heaven and are regarded as dancers of the celestial world) and the Digpals (custodians, who are also the patron deities, of the eight corners of the world)—all of them came to Chitrakoot at that time¹. (1)

Lord Ram bowed his head to show respect to each of them. All the exalted Beings (named herein above) felt exhilarated, and they derived immense pleasure by seeing the Lord, feeling that their eyesight has been fully rewarded². (2)

[Note—¹All these exalted Beings came to pay their obeisance to Lord Ram and thank him for taking so much trouble for them in order to free them from the torments of Ravana, the king of the demons*. All of them were troubled by Ravana, and all wanted to get rid of this nuisance#. Since Lord Ram was on his way to eliminate the ferocious demons, these Gods, Nagas, Kinnars and Digpals wished to thank the Lord and tell him that they were ready to provide him any support he needs\$.

{*Refer: Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 181—to Doha no. 182; (b) Lanka Kand, (ii) Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 25; (iii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 28.

#Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 184 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it; and (b) Lanka Kand, (ii) Chaupai line nos. 8-12 that precede Doha no. 110.

\$Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 187—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 188.

²A similar idea, that the Gods and others felt exhilarated when they saw Lord Ram, has also been expressed elsewhere in Ram Charit Manas. For instance, refer to: Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precede Doha no. 317.]

बराषि सुमन कह देव समाजू । नाथ सनाथ भए हम आजू ॥ ३ ॥

करि बिनती दुख दुसह सुनाए । हरषित निज निज सदन सिधाए ॥ ४ ॥

baraṣi sumana kaha dēva samājū. nātha sanātha bha'ē hama ājū. 3.

kari binatī dukha dusaha sunā'ē. haraṣita nija nija sadana sidhā'ē. 4.

The exhilarated Gods showered flowers upon Lord Ram¹ and said in unison: 'Oh Lord, today we feel very blessed and fortunate (that we have got this opportunity to see thine holy form and pay our obeisance to thee; we also feel exceedingly obliged and thankful to thee that thou art taking so much trouble for our sake, and we hereby express our deepest gratitude to thee with a commitment of being always loyal to thee). (3)

They (Gods, Nagas, Kinnars, Digpals) prayed to Lord Ram, and told the Lord the immensity of troubles that they were facing (because of Ravana).

Then filled with joy (that the Lord had listened to their prayers and nodded to them that he would take care of their complaints), they cheerfully returned to their respective abodes². (4)

[Note—¹We read in Ram Charit Manas that there were many occasions when the Gods have showered flower on Lord Ram from the heavens—for instance, refer to: (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 262; (ii) Doha no. 264; (iii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 306; (iv) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 309; (b) Lanka Kand, (v) Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 103; (vi) Doha no. 114.

²This was the first opportunity that the gods and others have got to submit their grievances to Lord Ram personally, to thank him and express their gratitude to him, and to offer their obeisance as well as allegiance to the Lord.

Earlier, when the gods, saints and mother earth had prayed to the Supreme Being to help them because Ravana was causing great misery to them, the Lord had not revealed his divine form to them, for they only heard a voice in the sky, but saw no physical form of the Lord. This is clear when we carefully read what has been narrated with respect to this episode in Ram Charit Manas—apropos: Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 186; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 187.

Now these gods etc. were not only actually seeing the same Lord in a physical form, but have also got an opportunity to pay their obeisance to him and say ‘thank you’. This is the reason why they all came personally to Lord Ram to express their gratitude as well as to repeat their grievances to him by way of a reminder, so as to reassure themselves that the Lord has not forgotten about the issue.]

चित्रकूट रघुनंदनु छाए । समाचार सुनि सुनि मुनि आए ॥ ५ ॥

आवत देखि मुदित मुनिबृंदा । कीन्ह दंडवत रघुकुल चंदा ॥ ६ ॥

citrakūṭa raghunandanu chā'ē. samācāra suni suni muni ā'ē. 5.
āvata dēkhi mudita munibr̥ndā. kīnha daṇḍavata raghukula candā. 6.

As the news of Lord Ram making his dwelling in Chitrakoot spread, the sages, hermits and ascetics living in and around this place came to meet the Lord. (5)

When Lord Ram, who was like the moon in the race of kings belong to family of king Raghu (raghukula candā)¹, saw that these exhilarated sages etc. were coming to him, the Lord prostrated before them (to show his respect to these holy and pious souls). (6)

[Note—¹There are countless stars in the sky, some bright and other not so bright. But the moon dominates the night sky with its brilliant presence, and all other stars fade when compared to it. This analogy is employed here to mean that though there were many great kings if the race named after king Raghu, but Lord Ram was the most exalted, the most glorious, and the most famous amongst them all.

The hermitage of Lord Ram became a meeting point for sages, hermits and ascetics of that place who would regularly come there and hold discourses on religious, spiritual, theological and metaphysical subjects. We shall read later on that

when Bharat reached the vicinity of Chitrakoot, and Guha Nishad went up a hillock to see around and locate the exact place where the thatched dwelling of Lord Ram was situated, he would see the Lord sitting there, surrounded by a number of sages—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 237 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it.]

मुनि रघुबरहि लाइ उर लेहीं । सुफल होन हित आसिष देहीं ॥ ७ ॥
सिय सौमित्रि राम छबि देखहिं । साधन सकल सफल करि लेखहिं ॥ ८ ॥

muni raghubarahi lā'i ura lēhīm. suphala hōna hita āsiṣa dēhīm. 7.
siya saumitri rāma chabi dēkhahīm. sādhana sakala saphala kari lēkhahīm. 8.

The visiting sages, hermits and ascetics would affectionately embrace Lord Ram, and bless the Lord that his mission would be successfully accomplished. (7)

By seeing the beauteous and divine form of Lord Ram, Laxman and Sita, all of them were full of joy, and saw that all the efforts they have made, and all the different religious practices they had engaged in, have indeed been successful, and that they were fully rewarded for their efforts¹. (8)

[Note—¹This was a common refrain of all those who met Lord Ram—for every single soul felt very blessed by seeing Lord Ram; all felt that they have been fully rewarded for whatever meritorious deeds that they might have done in their lives till that date.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 106 (sage Bharadwaj); (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 125 (sage Valmiki).

Other sages and even ordinary people had the same feeling as these above mentioned great sages, Bharadwaj and Valmiki when they met and saw Lord Ram—apropos: (i) Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 108; (ii) Doha no. 110 along with Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes it; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 113; (iv) Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 114; (v) Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 115; (vi) Doha no. 121; (vii) Doha no. 122 along with Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes it.

Later on in the story, we shall read that when Lord Ram reached the hermitage of sage Agastya, all the sages present there felt very glad and elated to see the Lord—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 12 along with Chaupai line no. 13 that precedes it.

Doha no. 135 and Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that follow it herein below would sum up this eclectic feeling of exhilaration, joy and fulfillment by all those who had the good fortune to see Lord Ram.]

दो०. जथाजोग सनमानि प्रभु बिदा किए मुनिबृंद ।
करहिं जोग जप जाग तप निज आश्रमन्हि सुछंद ॥ १३४ ॥
dōhā.

jathājōga sanamāni prabhu bidā ki'ē munibr̥nda.
karahim̐ jōga japa jāga tapa nija āśramanhi suchanda. 134.

The Lord paid due honours to these visiting sages, hermits and ascetics, and then bid them goodbye.

When these holy souls returned to their respective hermitages, they engaged themselves fearlessly in pursuing their spiritual objectives and practicing their religious faiths (without feeling scared of being harmed by the demons who roamed around and tormented them earlier)¹. (Doha no. 134)

[Note—¹These sages, hermits and ascetics were aware of Lord Ram's mission, which was to eliminate the demons, and they have blessed the Lord for success in his mission—which is clearly stated in Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes this Doha no. 134 herein above.

Now therefore, with the Supreme Lord there to protect them, they had nothing to fear from. Hence, they engaged in their religious practices and spiritual pursuits 'fearlessly'.

In this context, we can refer to the episode of sage Vishwamitra earlier. The demons had been tormenting the sage and continuously defiling his fire sacrifice. Then when he became fed up with all this, the sage decided to bring Lord Ram to get rid of this nuisance of the demons. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precede Doha no. 206.

Sage Valmiki also makes it clear that he knows why Lord Ram has come to the forest—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 127.

Later on, Lord Ram hints that all great sages living in the forest were aware of his mission when he meets sage Agastya. Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precedes Doha no. 13.]

चौ०. यह सुधि कोल किरातन्ह पाई । हरषे जनु नव निधि घर आई ॥ १ ॥
कंद मूल फल भरि भरि दोना । चले रंक जनु लूटन सोना ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

yaha sudhi kōla kirātanha pāī. haraṣē janu nava nidhi ghara āī. 1.
kanda mūla phala bhari bhari dōnā. calē raṅka janu lūṭana sōnā. 2.

When the members of the hill tribes known as Kola and Kirat¹ that inhabited the surrounding hills of Chitrakoot came to learn that Lord Ram has come to stay there, they were delighted as if all the nine types of rare treasures² have found their way right inside their own homes. (1)

Filling cups made of leaves with edible roots and fruits that were to be offered as refreshments for Lord Ram and to tell the Lord that he was most welcome in their midst³, these tribals cheerfully proceeded to meet the Lord with a lot of excitement and enthusiasm that paupers would usually display when they are on their way to loot a treasury of gold that was made freely available to them⁴. (2)

[Note—¹The ‘Kolas and the Kirats’ are hunting tribes that live in the remote hills, away from civilization. These Kolas and Kirats are to be distinguished from the ones who had come to erect the thatched dwelling for Lord Ram, for they were actually Gods in their forms—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 133.

²These are the special assets of rarity that a person possesses. These nine Nidhis may be spiritual or worldly; they may be tangible or intangible. They are obtained as a reward for living a honourable life based on the principles of Dharma (righteousness, probity, propriety and good conduct and thoughts). In brief they are the following:-

Spiritual assets—according to Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha 35-36, they are—(i) communion with saints and pious people where the Lord’s glories are being sung, (ii) serving one’s teacher and elders, (iii) praising the Lord’s glories and doing Kirtan and Bhajan which are community singing of the Lord’s glories, (iv) repeating the divine Mantras or holy words of the Lord, i.e. doing Japa, (v) having such virtues as ‘Dam’ or tolerance, patience, fortitude and resilience, ‘Sheel’ or good and righteous demeanors, ‘Virati’ or being renunciate and detached from deeds and to be dispassionate towards the world, ‘Sam’ or equanimity, looking everything as Brahm, having a non-dual approach of or view of the world, ‘Santosh’ or contentedness, and ‘Saral’ or simplicity and humility, (vi) having no deceit, conceit and falsehoods, (vii) not finding faults with others and criticizing them unnecessarily, (viii) to have firm reliance and faith in the Lord, and (ix) not to feel dejected, depressed, despaired, inferior, lowly and condemned under any adverse circumstances, because the great and merciful Lord is always with them.

Worldly assets—such as gold, silver, diamond, gems such as ruby, sapphire and emerald etc.; kith and kin such as sons, wife, pets and livestock, homestead and farmland, name, fame and majesty etc. These worldly assets are at the micro level what the Gods possess at the macro level and kept in the custody of Kuber who is the treasurer of Gods.

Celestial or the heavenly assets of the Gods—these are represented by the precious gems stored in the treasury of Kuber, the treasurer of Gods. They are known as Padma, Mahapadma, Makar, Kachap, Mukund, Nandak, Neel, Shankha, and Kharba. These terms were also used in ancient mathematics to measure quantity such as units, hundreds, thousands, millions, billions and trillions in modern language.

According to another version, the nine Nidhis are the various special virtues or qualities or attributes that one possesses, and which make him special amongst others. They are the following—(i) Buddhi—intelligence and the power to discriminate, to think sharply, quickly, logically, rationally, deeply and analytically. (ii) Bal—strength, vigour and power of the body and of the mind as well as of the spirit. (iii) Yasha—fame, good reputation and name; majesty and renown. (iv) Dhairya—to have courage, fortitude, resilience, ability to hold on in the face of greatest adversity, misfortune and opposition. (v) Nirbhayataa—fearlessness, courage, bravery and an indomitable spirit. (vi) Aarogyataa—to be freed from diseases and illnesses, both mental as well as bodily. (vii) Ajaadyataa—the opposite of Jadataa; to be free from the negative trait of inertia, lethargy, depression, stagnation, lack of drive, initiative and will power. (viii) Vaakya-patutaa—to be an expert orator; speaking skills, eloquence, diplomacy, and wise and intelligent choice of the spoken word. (ix) Bhakti—to have steady and robust devotion, loyalty, dedication and conviction for one’s chosen deity and faith. This quality, of course, comes under the category of spiritual assets also.

Other variations include the following qualities in this list of Nidhis because they are like an asset for a man which stand him in good stead in his life— (i) Sham—having self restraint and control; having peace, tranquility, serenity and quietness; being able to suppress desires, yearnings and natural instincts and impulses. (ii) Dam—tolerance, forbearance, fortitude. (iii) Upriti—renunciation, detachment, dispassion, indifference and non-involvement. (iv) Titksha—endurance, patience, fortitude, sufferance, equanimity. (v) Samadhan—the ability to find a solution, an answer to even the most vexing problem; lack of confusion or doubts; clarity of thoughts and conception. (vi) Shraddha—having faith, belief, conviction, reverence and devotion. (vii) Sakhya—friendship and the ability to co-exist with even one's adversary. (viii) Daya—kindness, compassion, graciousness. (ix) Atma Bodha—self-realization and being enlightened about the Atma, the pure consciousness, that resides inside one's inner self as his soul, as his spirit.

Sometimes, the last Nidhi of Atma Bodh is replaced with 'Seva' or the natural habit of serving others selflessly.

³A similar narration is found earlier when the villagers came to know that Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman have in the vicinity of their villages. This news mightily gladdened the hearts of these humble village folks who hurriedly collected eatables, such roots, stems and fruits, in small cups or plates and rushed to meet the Lord to pay their obeisance to him, and to present their humble gifts to the Lord; some even brought drinking water in pitchers—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 88 (fruits, roots and stems); (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 115 (drinking water in pitchers).

We shall read later on in our story that when Bharat had come to Chitrakoot in order to somehow persuade Lord Ram to return home to Ayodhya, he too was welcomed in the same way by these humble hill tribes who brought fruits, roots and stems to be offered as refreshments for Bharat and for all others who had accompanied him—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 250.

⁴Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 114 where we read that the villagers were held enthralled by the divine sight of Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman, and their condition was similar to paupers who look at a heap of priceless gems that is present right before their eyes.

When Lord Ram and Laxman had gone to see the sights of the city of Janakpur, and the citizens came to know about their visit, everyone kept aside whatever work they were engaged in at that time and rushed out to see the two brothers as if 'paupers rush to grab a treasure of gold that is being offered to them for free'—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 220.]

तिन्ह महँ जिन्ह देखे दोउ भ्राता । अपर तिन्हहि पूँछहि मगु जाता ॥ ३ ॥
कहत सुनत रघुबीर निकाई । आइ सबन्हि देखे रघुराई ॥ ४ ॥

tinha maham' jinha dēkhē dō'u bhrātā. apara tinhahi pūm'chahim magu jātā.
3.

kahata sunata raghubīra nikā'ī. ā'i sabanhi dēkhē raghurā'ī. 4.

While on their way to meet Lord Ram, these tribals would encounter some others on the road who had already met the Lord and were on their way back. So the former group would eagerly enquire from the latter group about their experiences, and what they could tell about the Lord (such as how they felt when they met the Lord, how they were received by him, what small talk they had with the Lord, and to tell them the exact direction in which they should proceed). (3)

In the aforesaid manner, talking and listening enthusiastically about the glories and anecdotes related to Lord Ram¹, the brave Lord of king Raghu's family (raghubīra), everyone finally came and saw (or met) the Lord of the Raghus ("raghurā'ī"; Lord Ram) personally. (4)

[Note—¹When Lord Ram was passing by villages and hamlets, and the news of his arrival spread fast like wildfire, everyone who heard it dashed to meet the Lord. Some had already met him and were returning home, while others were still on their way to meet the Lord. The latter group of people would meet the former group on the road, and they would engage themselves in chatting animatedly about the Lord; those going to meet the Lord would excitedly enquire from those who had already met him all they could tell the former about their meeting with the Lord.

This idea would be clear when we refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 110; (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 112; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 121.

Earlier in the story we have read that when Lord Ram and Laxman had gone to see the sights of the city of Janakpur, and the citizens came to know about their visit, everyone kept aside whatever work they were engaged in at that time and rushed out to see the two brothers as if 'paupers rush to grab a treasure of gold that is being offered to them for free'—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 220.

Not only this, Lord Ram and Laxman were the talk of the town, for the whole city of Janakpur was abuzz with excited people from all walks of life who were animatedly talking only about them—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 220—to Doha no. 223; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 240—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 242.]

करहिं जोहारु भेंट धरि आगे । प्रभुहि बिलोकहिं अति अनुरागे ॥ ५ ॥

चित्र लिखे जनु जहँ तहँ ठाढ़े । पुलक सरीर नयन जल बाढ़े ॥ ६ ॥

karahim̐ jōhāru bhēṇṭa dhari āgē. prabhuhi bilōkahim̐ ati anurāgē. 5.
citra likhē janu jaham̐ taham̐ ṭhāṛhē. pulaka sarīra nayana jala bāṛhē. 6.

When they met Lord Ram, they loudly offered their obeisance to him, and after placing before the Lord all the gifts (edible root and fruits) that they had brought for him¹, they stood mesmerized and enthralled as they watched the Lord most affectionately. (5)

Their stood motionless as they were dazed by the profundity of the bewitching sight (of Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman) that they beheld before their eyes, even as tears flowed in streams and their bodies were thrilled. Verily, their condition was like that of people standing transfixed in admiration around someone in a portrait painted to depict the scene². (6)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 88 where we read that Guha Nishad placed before Lord Ram all the gifts in the form of fruits and edible roots and stems that he had brought with him.

²Characters painted in a portrait or a picture don't show any kind of movement. This analogy has been used here to give an idea of how the Kols and the Kirats were watching Lord Ram.

A similar situation prevailed earlier too when those villagers and travellers who met Lord Ram stood motionless and enthralled by the sight, and although the comparison with a portrait has not been made there, but the idea is the same—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 114; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 115; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 116.

During Lord Ram's visit to Janakpur earlier, we find a similar scene at the venue of the 'bow breaking ceremony' where the whole assembly sat motionless and transfixed with its eyes riveted on beautiful form of Lord Ram—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3 and 6 that precede Doha no. 244.]

राम सनेह मगन सब जाने । कहि प्रिय बचन सकल सनमाने ॥ ७ ॥

प्रभुहि जोहारि बहोरि बहोरी । बचन बिनीत कहहिं कर जोरी ॥ ८ ॥

rāma sanēha magana saba jānē. kahi priya bacana sakala sanamānē. 7.
prabhuhi jōhāri bahōri bahōrī. bacana binīta kahahim kara jōrī. 8.

Lord Ram realized that these people (the Kols and the Kirats) were overwhelmed with affection for him, so the Lord reciprocated their emotions by talking sweetly with them and showing them due honour¹. (7)

On their part, these innocent tribals repeatedly offered their obeisance and greetings to the Lord. Then each individual joined the palms of his hands as all of them spoke to the Lord in a very polite way (as follows in Doha no. 135 herein below). (8)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 88.]

दो०. अब हम नाथ सनाथ सब भए देखि प्रभु पाय ।

भाग हमारें आगमनु राउर कोसलराय ॥ १३५ ॥

dōhā.

aba hama nātha sanātha saba bha'ē dēkhi prabhu pāya.
bhāga hamārēm āgamanu rā'ura kōsalarāya. 135.

‘Oh Lord, today all of us feel highly lucky and honoured to have the Lord with us, and to have the good fortune to see your august feet.

Lord, it is indeed our great luck and good fate that your majesty, the great honourable Lord of Kaushal (Ayodhya; “rā'ura kōsalarāya”) has come to visit us.¹ (Doha no. 135)

[Note—¹It is absolutely clear here that these hill dwelling tribes were aware of who Lord Ram was—that he was “rā'ura kōsalarāya”, i.e. the most honourable King of the kingdom of Kaushal, for Ayodhya was also known by this name.

Refer also to: Geetawali Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, verse no. 46 (stanza no. 6).]

चौ०. धन्य भूमि बन पंथ पहारा । जहँ जहँ नाथ पाउ तुम्ह धारा ॥ १ ॥

धन्य बिहग मृग काननचारी । सफल जनम भए तुम्हहि निहारी ॥ २ ॥

हम सब धन्य सहित परिवारा । दीख दरसु भरि नयन तुम्हारा ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

dhan'ya bhūmi bana pantha pahārā. jaham' jaham' nātha pā'u tumha dhārā. 1.
dhan'ya bihaga mṛga kānanacārī. saphala janama bha'ē tumhahi nihārī. 2.
hama saba dhan'ya sahita parivārā. dīkha darasu bhari nayana tumhārā. 3.

[The Kols and the Kirats continued—] ‘Oh Lord, fortunate is the earth, the forest, the path, and the hills and the mountains—wherever you have put your holy feet, all such places are very fortunate indeed¹. (1)

Similarly, fortunate are the birds and the animals of the forest who have seen your divine form, and indeed their lives have been successful and they have got the full reward of being born in their individual forms by the virtue of their being able to see you (for there are countless other birds and animals who missed this chance, and they surely would envy their peers who have seen you). (2)

Likewise, we and our whole families are also most fortunate and blessed that we have been granted the opportunity to see your holy form to the full contentment of our eyes, for we could see you from up close for as long as we wished, and as much as we wanted². (3)

[Note—¹The villagers and travellers had expressed the same sentiment earlier when they met Lord Ram. Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 113; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 122. ;

Refer also to: Geetawali Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, verse no. 46 (stanza no. 1).

²Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 88; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 113; (iii)

Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 120; (iv) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 128.]

कीन्ह बासु भल ठाउँ बिचारी । इहाँ सकल रितु रहब सुखारी ॥ ४ ॥
हम सब भाँति करब सेवकाई । करि केहरि अहि बाघ बराई ॥ ५ ॥

kīnha bāsu bhala ṭhā'um' bicārī. ihām' sakala ritu rahaba sukhārī. 4.
hama saba bhām'ti karaba sēvakā'ī. kari kēhari ahi bāgha barā'ī. 5.

Lord, you have selected a fine place to stay, for you shall live here very comfortably in all the seasons of the year¹. (4)

Meanwhile, we shall be glad to serve you in all possible ways; we shall protect you from wild animals such as elephants, lions, poisonous snakes, and tigers (that roam freely here).

[To wit, oh Lord, you need not be worried about your safety while you are here in our midst, for we shall keep constant vigil and protect you from all sorts of dangers, such as attack from wild animals. Not only that, we are ready at your service in any way you need us; we shall be available to you at your beck-and-call.] (5)

[Note—¹Sage Valmiki has also told Lord Ram that he would live comfortably in Chitrakoot, inspite of the fact that there are a lot many varieties of wild animals there—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 132.]

बन बेहड़ गिरि कंदर खोहा । सब हमार प्रभु पग पग जोहा ॥ ६ ॥
तहँ तहँ तुम्हहि अहेर खेलाउब । सर निरझर जलठाउँ देखाउब ॥ ७ ॥
हम सेवक परिवार समेता । नाथ न सकुचब आयसु देता ॥ ८ ॥

bana bēhara giri kandara khōhā. saba hamāra prabhu paga paga jōhā. 6.
taham' taham' tumhahi ahēra khēlā'uba. sara nirajhara jalaṭhā'um' dēkhā'uba. 7.

hama sēvaka parivāra samētā. nātha na sakucaba āyasu dētā. 8.

Oh Lord (prabhu)! The forest is very dense and formidable, and there are deep caves and crevices dotting the hills that surround this place—but we know every inch of this habitat, and we are well acquainted with every foot of it (because we have been born here, and we have been living here for many generations, walking and hunting all our lives inside the forest and moving around on the hills). (6)

We shall accompany and help you in hunting; we shall show you around the place, pointing out to you so many wonderful lakes, ponds and waterfalls that abound here. (7)

We pledge to you in all honesty that all of us are your dedicated servants, and so therefore you must not hesitate to order us to do anything you wish us to do for you.’
(8)

[Note—It is clear here that these Kols and Kirats would stay close to Lord Ram’s dwelling in order to keep constant watch on it and protect it from any unforeseen danger. They would be in constant touch with the Lord, and never let him feel lonely or without any support. Should the Lord need any help, these Kols and Kirats were there to do what was necessary.

To wit, Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman never felt that there were away from their city and subjects of Ayodhya, because for all practical purposes Chitrakoot had become a de facto Ayodhya for them, and these natives of Chitrakoot, i.e. the Kols and Kirats, served the Lord with full devotion and affection as his own subjects would have served him in Ayodhya.

In this context, we ought to recall what Laxman’s mother Sumitra had told her son—that wherever Lord Ram stays, that place itself would become Ayodhya. Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 74.]

दो०. बेद बचन मुनि मन अगम ते प्रभु करुना ऐन ।
बचन किरातन्ह केसुनत जिमि पितु बालक बैन ॥ १३६ ॥
dōhā.

bēda bacana muni mana agama tē prabhu karunā aina.
bacana kirātanha kē sunata jimi pitu bālaka baina. 136.

Verily indeed, for sooth and without gainsay, the supreme Lord who is beyond the understanding and reach of the Vedas although they speak volumes about him, and similarly he is inaccessible to the mind of the great sages, hermits and ascetics who meditate and contemplate upon him their entire lives¹—that same supreme Lord who is an embodiment of the virtues of mercy, compassion, kindness and grace heard these words of the Kols and the Kirats just like a doting father would listen affectionately to what his dear child was telling him*.

[*This Doha can be read as follows also: “The supreme Lord, whom the Vedas can’t describe in words, and who remains out of reach of the mind of great sages etc., was so moved by the affection of the Kols and the Kirats that out of compassion and mercy for them, he gracefully and affectionately listened to whatever they said to him just like a loving father would listen to his dear son.”]² (Doha no. 136)

[Note—¹The same idea has been expressed elsewhere in Ram Charit Manas—for instance, Baal Kand, Chanda line no. 13 that precedes Doha no. 186.

Lord Ram was an ocean of mercy, compassion, grace and kindness—refer for instance: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 192

²Lord Ram was ever so obliging to his devotees; the Lord would always go out of his way to keep his devotees happy and contented, and would do what pleased them. In this context, refer to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chanda line nos. 1, 4 and 14 that precede Doha no. 186; (b) Lanka Kand, (ii) Chanda line no. 11 that precedes

Doha no. 111; (iii) Doha no. 117-a; (c) Uttar Kand, (iv) Chanda line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 130.

This nature of Lord Ram is reiterated in verse no. 1 that follows herein below.

An exactly similar idea, of parents deriving immense pleasure when they hear their child speaking to them even in an incorherent language, is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 8.

Hence, the Lord was very amused and smiled to himself when he heard the Kols and Kirats telling him that they would protect him from wild animals, and accompany him while he ventured out to hunt! Lord Ram was to fight ferocious demons, and he had already shown his might and prowess by slaying Tadka as well as Marich and Subahu when he had gone to protect sage Vishwamitra's fire sacrifice. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 209; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 210.}

Later on, the Lord would be facing and eliminating more ferocious demons. So, could he not deal with ordinary wild animals such as elephants, tigers, lions, serpents etc.? Yet, the Lord nodded his approval to whatever these humble tribals told him just in order to keep them happy in deference of their love and devotion for him.]

चौ०. रामहि केवल प्रेमु पिआरा । जानि लेउ जो जाननिहारा ॥ १ ॥

राम सकल बनचर तब तोषे । कहि मृदु बचन प्रेम परिपोषे ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

rāmahi kēvala prēmu pi'ārā. jāni lē'u jō jānanihārā. 1.

rāma sakala banacara taba tōṣē. kahi mṛdu bacana prēma paripōṣē. 2.

Verily indeed, in all sooth and without gainsay, let it be known to all those who are not yet aware of Lord Ram's intrinsic nature that he is concerned with the level of affection that one has for him, and all other things or considerations are immaterial and irrelevant as far as the Lord is concerned; let this irrefutable fact be known to one and all¹. (1)

The Lord, therefore, satisfied all the forest-dwelling people by speaking to them amiably, using sweet words that were soaked in affection for them, words that assured the tribals that the Lord was favourably inclined towards them. (2)

[Note—¹The forest-dwelling humble people welcomed Lord Ram and served the Lord in the best way they could. The Lord was extremely pleased with their devotion and affection for him, and so it is observed here that the only relationship the Lord recognizes is that of love, affection and devotion.]

बिदा किए सिर नाइ सिधाए । प्रभु गुन कहत सुनत घर आए ॥ ३ ॥

एहि बिधि सिय समेत दोउ भाई । बसहिं बिपिन सुर मुनि सुखदाई ॥ ४ ॥

bidā ki'ē sira nā'i sidhā'ē. prabhu guna kahata sunata ghara ā'ē. 3.

ēhi bidhi siya samēta dō'u bhā'ī. basahim bipina sura muni sukhadā'ī. 4.

Lord Ram then bid them good-bye, and they bowed their heads reverentially before the Lord and departed from there. While returning they talked about the Lord affectionately, telling each other and listening about the Lord's virtues and glories all the way back home¹. (3)

In this way (as recounted in the aforesaid verses), the two brothers (Lord Ram and Laxman) lived in the forest with Sita, giving immense joy, happiness, comfort and pleasure to the gods, as well as to the sages, hermits and ascetics*.

[*This verse can be read as follows also: "In this way, the two brothers (i.e. Lord Ram and Laxman) who gave immense joy, happiness, comfort and pleasure to the gods, as well as to the sages, hermits and ascetics, lived in the forest with Sita."]² (4)

[Note—¹Refer to the narration earlier of how everyone who met Lord Ram while he was on his way to the forest, such as the inhabitants of the nearby villages and hamlets, as well as the wayfarers who were on the way to their own destinations, were enthralled and captivated by their meeting with the Lord, how they offered their services to him, how the Lord interacted with them very amiably and politely, how he affectionately told them to let him go ahead onwards to his destination, how although the villagers returned home or the travellers went their own way but they sent their hearts and minds with Lord Ram in a symbolic way, and how they would continue to talk about the Lord for all the rest of their lives. In this connection, refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 109; (ii) Doha no. 112 along with Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede it; (iii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 114—to Doha no. 122.

²Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 93 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede it (Laxman's advice to Guha Nishad); and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 132 (sage Valmiki's advice to Lord Ram).]

जब तें आइ रहे रघुनायकु । तब तें भयउ बन मंगलदायकु ॥ ५ ॥

फूलहिं फलहिं बिटप बिधि नाना । मंजु बलित बर बेलि बिताना ॥ ६ ॥

jaba tēm ā'i rahē raghunāyaku. taba tēm bhaya'u banu maṅgaladāyaku. 5.
phūlahiṁ phalahiṁ biṭapa bidhi nānā. maṅju balita bara bēli bitānā. 6.

{In the following verses, the natural beauty of Chitrakoot has been described. The Nature was in all her splendorous best to welcome Lord Ram and to tell the Lord that she, and the entire creation that she represents, are extremely elated, exuberant and thrilled to have the Supreme Being living personally in that place which symbolically was in the 'lap of Nature' as it was surrounded on all sides with verdant forests, undulating hills, water bodies such as ponds and lakes with crystal clear water, and sweet water flowing in streams, rivulets and the river Mandakini, with birds of all species hopping, chirping and playing around merrily, and wild animals of all sorts roaming freely without fear or animosity.

The profound glories and the bewitching natural beauty of Chitrakoot has been extensively and very wonderfully described in Tulsidas' other books, such as (a)

Geetawali Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, verse nos. 43-50; (b) Kavitawali Ramayan, Uttar Kand, verse nos. 141-142; and (c) Vinai Patrika, verse nos. 23-24.

The mesmerizing beauty of Mother Nature that would leave one enthralled and captivated—especially in the areas that retained their pristine forms, and were left untouched by encroachments and exploitations of all kinds that defiled its purity and ruined its intrinsic charm—have been described elsewhere in Ram Charit Manas also. The context is Lord Ram living on Mt. Prabarshan in the kingdom of Kishkindha, after his meeting with Sugriv and before messengers were dispatched in all the directions to find out about Sita. The environment of Mt. Prabarshan was similar to that of Mt. Chitrakoot, hence that description becomes relevant in our present narration as it would give us an idea about the poetical prowess of Goswami Tulsidas when he would attempt to describe Mother Nature’s astounding finery, its stupendous beauty, and its fantastic charm. Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 12—to Doha no. 17.}

Ever since Lord Ram, the Lord of the Raghus (*raghunāyaku*), came to abide in the forests of Chitrakoot, the place, being blessed by the Lord’s august presence, became holy, and it granted auspiciousness to one and all¹. (5)

Trees of all varieties flourished in abundance; they were all laden with blooming flowers and ripened fruits. Beautiful creepers that twined around them spread in all directions to form charming canopies everywhere (that provided cool and fragrant shade). (6)

[Note—¹The same idea has been expressed in relation to Mt. Prabarshan later on. Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 13.]

सुरतरु सरिस सुभायँ सुहाए । मनहुँ बिबुध बन परिहरि आए ॥ ७ ॥
गुंज मंजुतर मधुकर श्रेनी । त्रिबिध बयारि बहइ सुख देनी ॥ ८ ॥

surataru sarisa subhāyam̐ suhā'ē. manahum̐ bibudha bana parihari ā'ē. 7.
gun̐ja man̐jutara madhukara śrēnī. tribidha bayāri baha'i sukha dēnī. 8.

These trees resembled the evergreen tree of the gods (“surataru”; known as the Kalpa Taru) in their beauty and charm, as well as their ability to give comfort and pleasure.

Verily, it appeared that the aforesaid ‘tree of gods’ had left heaven to come down to earth and reveal itself in countless forms (when it learnt that Lord Ram has selected that place to live, in order to do its bit to make the place as beautiful as was possible for it to provide comfort and pleasure to the Lord)¹. (7)

Bees in large numbers forming endless columns (or strings) merrily buzzed and hummed around sweetly².

Breeze that had all the three qualities of coolness, fragrance and softness blew pleasantly everywhere³. (8)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Kishkindha Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 13; (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 15; (b) Uttar Kand, (iii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 23.]

²Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 13; (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 17.

³Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 23.]

दो०. नीलकंठ कलकंठ सुक चातक चक्र चकोर ।
भाँति भाँति बोलहिं बिहग श्रवन सुखद चित चोर ॥ १३७ ॥

dōhā.

nīlakaṇṭha kalakaṇṭha suka cātaka cakka cakōra.
bhāmṭi bhāmṭi bōlahiṁ bihaga śravana sukhada cita cōra. 137.

Warbling birds of all species and varieties, such as the blue-necked jay, the cuckoo, the parrot, the sparrow hawk, the ruddy goose, the Indian red-legged partridge, and many others, called out in a cacophony of sound that pleased the ears and comforted the soul of the hearer¹. (Doha no. 137)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Kishkindha Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 3-7 that precede Doha no. 17; (b) Uttar Kand, (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 23.]

चौ०. करि केहरि कपि कोल कुरंगा । बिगतबैर बिचरहिं सब संग ॥ १ ॥
फिरत अहेर राम छबि देखी । होहिं मुदित मृगबृंद बिसेषी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kari kēhari kapi kōla kuraṅgā. bigatabaira bicarahiṁ saba saṅgā. 1.
phirata ahēra rāma chabi dēkhī. hōhiṁ mudita mṛgabṛnda bisēṣī. 2.

Elephants, lions, monkeys, wild boars and deer—animals of all kinds lived and roamed around happily and amiably together, discarding their natural animosity towards each other. (1)

When they saw Lord Ram moving around with a bow and arrow in his hands like a hunter would roam in the forest in search of a prey, then all these animals derived immense pleasure at this sight¹. (2)

[Note—¹Refer also to: (a) Kavitawali Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, verse no. 27; (b) Geetawali Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, verse no. 46.]

The good fortune of the wild animals who saw Lord Ram's divine form is reiterated in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 136 herein above.

Instead of being terrified that this ‘hunter’ (i.e. Lord Ram) would kill them, and consequently running away from him, these animals felt very happy at the sight of Lord Ram moving around freely amidst them, giving their souls an opportunity to derive bliss and tranquility. So, the fortunate ones amongst the wild animals who happened to see Lord Ram nearby would stand at ease, watching the Lord fearlessly, and deriving immense spiritual bliss and joy by this sight, instead of fearing him and running away for the sake of their lives, because they had the inner feeling that the Lord would never harm them.

And in case the Lord did shoot any of them with his arrows, that particular animal thought itself very lucky as it gave its soul an opportunity to find liberation from the gross body of an animal in which it had been trapped due to some consequences related to its past deeds, and attain deliverance from the cycle of transmigration—for the merciful Lord Ram would ensure that the soul of that animal whom he shot would be blessed with instant emancipation and salvation, that it attained eternal beatitude, felicity and peace without any doubt. In this context, there are verses in Ram Charit Manas that explicitly endorse this view regarding the fate of animals whom the Lord may have shot—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 205.

Now, dear readers, let’s close our eyes for a moment and see on the canvas of our minds what was happening at that point of time ages ago. When Lord Ram made eye contact with each of these animals, he could immediately know that individual’s inner thoughts, emotions and wishes, as the Lord was ‘antaryaami Parmatma’, i.e. the Supreme Atma, representing cosmic Consciousness, that lived in the body of all the animals in a subtle form as their individual Atma, which is called the soul of the individual concerned. This fact is reiterated at many places in Ram Charit Manas, in one context or the other. For instance, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chanda line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 186 (gods, sages and mother earth); (b) Ayodhya Kand, (ii) Doha no. 127 (sage Valmiki); (c) Aranya Kand, (iii) Chaupai line no. 17 that precedes Doha no. 11 (sage Sutikshan).

To wit, Lord Ram read the inner thoughts of all these animals, and perceived that while all of them were offering their mental obeisance to him and seeking his blessings, but the majority of them wanted him to spare their lives so that they can see him repeatedly, as the Lord’s sight gave them unbound pleasure and spiritual blissfulness of the purest kind, whereas there were some who were wiser and realized that since their gross body is perishable it would nevertheless die one day, then why not die the most fortunate death by dying at the hands of the Supreme Being and ensuring instant deliverance, emancipation, salvation, bliss, beatitude, felicity and eternal peace for their souls? Well, these wise animals thought to themselves as follows:

“Where will we get such a rare chance again if we miss this opportunity now, for being animals we can’t practice any of the spiritual devices that the scriptures prescribe whereby the creature’s soul can obtain liberation and deliverance from the endless cycle of birth and death, and since our bodies would one day become old and die nevertheless because of Kaal, which would be its due time to die, or it would be killed by some other animal who would devour it before Kaal does its bit, both deaths would inflict pain on us, and neither would we spiritually gain anything from such deaths—then why not die instantly and painlessly at the hands of the Lord while seeing his divine form right before us, and he affectionately looking at us with mercy showering upon us from his loving eyes, promising us a place in his heavenly abode? Forsooth, a creature is most fortunate if his gross body embraces death with the

Supreme Being standing guard over his soul to ensure its instant deliverance, emancipation and salvation. Verily and in all sooth, even great sages who have spent a lifetime doing different kinds of rigorous spiritual and religious practices in the hope of attaining such a death fail to fulfill their desires; why should we deny us this privilege when it comes knocking at our very doors?"

This brilliant spiritual idea, and eclectic view about the best fate that a creature can hope for his soul, is espoused by a vulture named Jatau in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 31, and by the king of the monkey kingdom, Baali, in Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 and Chanda line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 10.

So therefore, some of the animals who wished to die voluntarily such a glorious death were the only ones Lord Ram would shoot, and as for the rest, the Lord would bless them and oblige them by fulfilling their wish to see the Lord's divine form over and over again, with his repeated appearances before them during his routine wonderings in the forest.

What to talk of animals, even the cruel and ferocious demons who had been tormenting and terrorizing the world endlessly, and to eliminate whom the Lord had to assume the form of a human being and roam around the forest barefoot for fourteen years, enduring all its incumbent hardships, were granted liberation and deliverance when the Lord was obliged to kill them. This is clearly stated in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 45; (ii) Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 114.

Even their ferocious king Ravana, who had abducted the Lord's wife Sita, found this rare privilege of attaining emancipation and salvation for his soul, and finding eternal peace, beatitude and felicity for himself when he died at the hands of Lord Ram. This is clearly stated in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 114.]

बिबुध बिपिन जहँ लागि जग माहीं । देखि राम बन सकल सिहाहीं ॥ ३ ॥
 सुरसरि सरसइ दिनकर कन्या । मेकलसुता गोदावरि धन्या ॥ ४ ॥
 सब सर सिंधु नदीं नद नाना । मंदाकिनि कर करहिं बखाना ॥ ५ ॥

bibudha bipina jaham̐ lagi jaga māhīm̐. dēkhi rāma banu sakala sihāhīm̐. 3.
 surasari sarasa'i dinakara kan'yā. mēkalasutā gōdāvari dhan'yā. 4.
 saba sara sindhu nadīm̐ nada nānā. mandākini kara karahīm̐ bakhānā. 5.

All other wonderful forests in the world, even those which were frequented by the gods, were envious of the forest where Lord Ram dwelt (in Chitrakoot), and lavishly praised it¹. (3)

The river Ganges (river of the gods), river Saraswati (an embodiment of knowledge, representing Brahma, the creator), river Yamuna (the daughter of the Sun God), river Narmad (the daughter of Mt. Maikal, on the banks of which Lord Shiva dwells), river Godavari (one of the revered rivers; near here Lord Ram would live at a place called Panchavati)—all these great rivers that are revered and regarded as blessed (dhan'yā), --- (4)

--- They, as well as all the lakes and ponds, the oceans and seas, rivers and streams together with their tributaries—i.e. every form of water body, of all nomenclatures and denominations, were unanimous in their praise of river Mandakini on whose banks Lord Ram chose to live². (5)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 132; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 136.

²Even sage Valmiki has praised river Mandakini. Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 132.]

उदय अस्त गिरि अरु कैलासू । मंदर मेरु सकल सुरबासू ॥ ६ ॥
 सैल हिमाचल आदिक जेते । चित्रकूट जसु गावहिं तेते ॥ ७ ॥
 बिंधि मुदित मन सुखु न समाई । श्रम बिनु बिपुल बड़ाई पाई ॥ ८ ॥

udaya asta giri aru kailāsū. mandara mēru sakala surabāsū. 6.
 saila himācala ādika jētē. citrakūṭa jasu gāvahiṁ tētē. 7.
 bindhi mudita mana sukhu na samāī. śrama binu bipula barāī pāī. 8.

Similarly, all the great mountains on earth, such as the one on which the sun rises and the one on which it sets (*udaya asta giri*; i.e. all the lofty mountains of the east and the west), as well as other great mountains such as Mt. Kailash (where Lord Shiva dwells), Mt. Mandarachal (the huge mountain used at the time of churning of the ocean by the gods and the demons in some ancient time), Mt. Meru (also known as Sumeru) where all the gods live (*mēru sakala surabāsū*), --- (6)

--- And Mt. Himachal (the snow covered Himalayas)—i.e. all the great mountains on earth, irrespective of where they were situated, were all unanimous in praise for Mt. Chitrakoot where Lord Ram had chosen to dwell¹. (7)

The mountain known as Vindiyachal (i.e. the mountain range where Chitrakoot is located) felt very glad and fortunate in its heart² that it has got so much praise and honour, and has become the envy of all its peers, without making any effort for it, as this praise came to it for free by the virtue of Lord Ram living in its midst. (8)

[Note—¹Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 and 8 that precede Doha no. 132.

²In all these and other verses where different inanimate elements of Nature are cited, such as water bodies, mountains and hills, and depicted as having some sort of feeling or emotion, it is to be noted that they have obviously been ‘personified’, i.e. injected with an imaginary form of life so they can have feelings, emotions and thoughts, and it is done in order to make the narration itself lively, to do poetic justice to the narrative, and to invite the reader to share the depth of feelings and the profundity of emotions of the poet who penned those lines, which in the present case is the great and blessed saint-poet Tulsidas who wrote this magnificent book Ram Charit Manas.]

दो०. चित्रकूट के बिहग मृग बेलि बिटप तृन जाति ।
पुन्य पुंज सब धन्य अस कहहिं देव दिन राति ॥ १३८ ॥

dōhā.

citrakūṭa kē bihaga mṛga bēli biṭapa tṛna jāti.
pun'ya punja saba dhan'ya asa kahahim dēva dina rāti. 138.

Verily in all sooth and without gainsay, the birds, the animals, the creepers, the trees, nay, even the humblest blade of grass or a twig, of whatever kind and species they were, were indeed a treasury of all good fortunes, embodiment of auspiciousness, and profoundly blessed—this is what the gods proclaim unanimously, and they affirm it every day and night¹. (Doha no. 138)

[Note—¹The gods never tired of praising every single entity, whether animate or inanimate, who lived in Chitrakoot where Lord Ram too dwelt. Indeed they were exceptionally fortunate, for the Lord chose to leave Ayodhya behind and come to live in Chitrakoot*; the unfortunate people of Ayodhya were denied the joy and happiness that one gets when one is near the Lord which these humble entities of Chitrakoot would get by the presence of Lord Ram in their midst. {*Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 139 herein below.}]

To wit, no one can doubt the glories of both Chitrakoot as well as all the units that together constituted its environ, giving the place a general ambiance of spiritual joy and blessedness marked by piety and holiness.

There is no surprise in it—for Lord Ram lived in Chitrakoot where all these fortunate entities too lived, and just as the mere presence of the single sun in the sky lights up the whole earth, the mere presence of Lord Ram made the entire place auspicious, blessed and holy.]

चौ०. नयनवंत रघुबरहि बिलोकी । पाइ जनम फल होहिं बिसोकी ॥ १ ॥
परसि चरन रज अचर सुखारी । भए परम पद के अधिकारी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

nayanavanta raghubarahi bilōkī. pā'i janama phala hōhim bisōkī. 1.
parasi carana raja acara sukhārī. bha'ē parama pada kē adhikārī. 2.

Those who had the benefit of eyesight, i.e. the living beings, got the fruit of their lives by being able to see the holy and divine form of Lord Ram, the brave Lord of the Raghus (raghubara).

[To wit, those creatures who had eyes, such as birds and animals, felt blessed when they saw Lord Ram's divine and holy form.]¹ (1)

While those who had no such privilege, i.e. those that could not 'see' the Lord, such as inanimate things, even they felt extremely blessed and became entitled to attain highest honours by their touching the dust of Lord Ram's holy feet.

[To wit, inanimate entities, such as the earth, the trees, the mountains and hills, as well as the water bodies, also felt that they were singularly blessed with good fortune because they could touch the dust of the holy feet of Lord Ram even though they could not move an inch. This entitled them to acquire great honour and be praised in this world.]² (2)

[Note—¹In this context, refer to what sage Valmiki had said in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 128.

²Similarly, in the context of this verse, refer to what sage Valmiki had said to Lord Ram in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 129.

A shining example of an inanimate thing finding spiritual bliss, as well as liberation and deliverance from any misfortune it might be subjected to is found in the episode related to Ahilya, the wife of sage Gautam. She was cursed to become a rock, but when Lord Ram touched that rock with his feet, Ahilya instantaneously found deliverance. This episode is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 210—to Doha no. 211.

In these two verses, the idea is that both the animate creatures as well as the inanimate things found equal joy and a feeling of blessedness by the presence of Lord Ram in their midst in Chitrakoot. The living beings, such as animals and birds, were blessed by Lord Ram when he enabled them to see him and thereby derive immense spiritual bliss and joy, while the inanimate things, such as earth, trees, hills and water bodies too were blessed by Lord Ram when he went to them to touch them with his feet.

Either way, both aspects of creation, the animate and the inanimate, felt that they are very fortunate and blessed because Lord Ram was living with them.]

सो बनू सैलु सुभायँ सुहावन । मंगलमय अति पावन पावन ॥ ३ ॥
महिमा कहिअ कवनि बिधि तासू । सुखसागर जहँ कीन्ह निवासू ॥ ४ ॥
पय पयोधि तजि अवध बिहाई । जहँ सिय लखनु रामु रहे आई ॥ ५ ॥

sō banu sailu subhāyam' suhāvana. maṅgalamaya ati pāvana pāvana. 3.

mahimā kahi'a kavani bidhi tāsū. sukhasāgara jaham' kīnha nivāsū. 4.

paya payōdhi taji avadha bihā'ī. jaham' siya lakhanu rāmu rahē ā'ī. 5.

Verily in all sooth and without gainsay, that forest and that hill (of Chitrakoot) are indeed regarded as most pleasant and charming, as being an embodiment of all auspiciousness, and as the best of their kind in terms of holiness and purity¹. (3)

Say, how can their glories and virtues be adequately sung or sufficiently praised where Lord Ram, who is an ocean of bliss, joy and happiness, would come to abide himself¹. (4)

[This verse would give the reason why the glories of Chitrakoot cannot be matched by any other place.]

It is because Lord Ram had preferred to leave the celestial ocean of milk (known as 'Kshir-Sagar' where Lord Vishnu, the primary form of Lord Ram, reclines

on the coiled body of the celestial serpent known as Seshnath) as well as the magnificent city of Ayodhya to come and live here (in the forest and hills of Chitrakoot). (5)

[Note—¹In the context of present Chaupai line nos. 3-4, refer also to the earlier Chaupai line no. 3 (forests) and line nos. 6-8 (hills and mountains) that precede Doha no. 138 herein above.]

कहि न सकहिं सुषमा जसि कानन । जौं सत सहस होहिं सहसानन ॥ ६ ॥
 सो मैं बरनि कहौं बिधि केहीं । डाबर कमठ कि मंदर लेहीं ॥ ७ ॥
 सेवहिं लखनु करम मन बानी । जाइ न सीलु सनेहु बखानी ॥ ८ ॥

kahi na sakahim suṣamā jasi kānana. jaum̐ sata sahasa hōhim̐ sahasānana. 6.
 sō main̐ barani kahauṁ bidhi kēhīm̐. ḍābara kamaṭha ki mandara lēhīm̐. 7.
 sēvahim̐ lakhanu karama mana bānī. jā'i na sīlu sanēhu bakhānī. 8.

[Further extolling the glories of the forests surrounding Chitrakoot, the poet Tulsidas says—]

Even if the thousand hooded celestial serpent known as Seshnath would try to describe the beauty and charm of the forests (of Chitrakoot) by his thousand tongues, he would fail to do so. (6)

Then say, this being the case, how can I describe it with my limited knowledge and abilities¹?

Say, can a tortoise who lives in a small pond ever be able to bear the weight of Mt. Mandrachal on its back²? [The answer is 'no'. Similarly, since Seshnath cannot sing the glories of the forests of Chitrakoot even though he has a thousand tongues, how can I, Tulsidas, ever expect or hope to do so?] (7)

[After describing the beauty of Chitrakoot and its environ, the poet now turns his attention to the main narrative, of how Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman lived there and spent their time.]

Laxman served Lord Ram and Sita most faithfully and diligently, ensuring that all his actions, all his thoughts and all his words were employed in this service.

His courteous and amiable nature, and his affection and devotion (for Lord Ram and Sita) were exemplary, and they were so refined and stellar in nature that words can't define or describe them³. (8)

[Note—¹The beauty of Chitrakoot with its surrounding hills and forests, and the inability of the poet to describe them sufficiently, has also been reiterated in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 249 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede it.

²This refers to the episode in ancient times when the gods and the demons had churned the celestial ocean in search of Amrit, the ambrosia of eternity. They had made Mt. Mandrachal the churning rod, and in order to support this colossal rod and

prevent it from sinking to the nether world, the Tortoise had placed it on the hard shell of its back.

³To wit, Laxman served Lord Ram and Sita very cheerfully and with a gladdened heart. He was always at their beck-and-call. He did everything joyfully and voluntarily, and not as a burden. He was never rude or evasive; he would always think that no discomfort or harm should come to Lord Ram and Sita. He carried out their wishes immediately, never postponing what he was expected to do. He would use his own intellect and wisdom to do anything that he was asked to do better than what Lord Ram or Sita would ordinarily expect him to do.

In this context, refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 142.]

दो०. छिनु छिनु लखि सिय राम पद जानि आपु पर नेहु।
करत न सपनेहुँ लखनु चितु बंधु मातु पितु गेहु ॥ १३९ ॥

dōhā.

chinu chinu lakhi siya rāma pada jāni āpu para nēhu.
karata na sapanēhum lakhanu citu bandhu mātu pitu gēhu. 139.

Every moment Laxman's eyes were looking at the feet of Lord Ram and Sita (i.e. he attended them like an obedient servant, observed decorum and protocol, and would never look directly at the face of Lord Ram or Sita in order to maintain their dignity).

And since every moment he could perceive that both of them, Lord Ram and Sita, loved him dearly and had immense affection for him, Laxman never remembered any of his kith and kin, including his parents, or his home¹. (Doha no. 139)

[Note—¹Lord Ram and Sita never allowed Laxman to feel as if he was away from his parents or near and dear ones. They showered so much love and affection on him, and took such care of him, entertaining him with stories from the scriptures and interesting anecdotes from different sources, making him feel comfortable and easy, so much so that Laxman completely forgot about his home and his friends as well as his family members back in Ayodhya. {Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 and 8 that precede Doha no. 141; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 142 herein below.}]

Remember that his mother Sumitra had advised him to treat Lord Ram as his father and Sita as his mother, to serve them diligently, and to remember that wherever the Lord lives, Laxman must treat that place as being equivalent to Ayodhya.

Sumitra's advice to Laxman has been narrated in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 74—to Chanda line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 75.]

चौ०. राम संग सिय रहति सुखारी । पुर परिजन गृह सुरति बिसारी ॥ १ ॥
छिनु छिनु पिय बिधु बदन निहारी । प्रमुदित मनहुँ चकोरकुमारी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

rāma saṅga siya rahati sukhārī. pura parijana gr̥ha surati bisārī. 1.
chinu chinu piya bidhu badanu nihārī. pramudita manahum̐ cakōrakumārī. 2.

Sita lived so happily with Lord Ram (in the forest at Chitrakoot) that she forgot about (the affection that she got from) her family members and (the comforts of) her home¹. (1)

Every moment she would glance affectionately at her beloved husband (Lord Ram), and felt as happy and contented as a female Chakor bird (i.e. the Indian red-legged partridge) would feel by repeatedly glancing at the full moon². (2)

[Note—¹Earlier we have read how Laxman too lived happily with Lord Ram, forgetting all about his home and family members—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 139 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it.

Now in these verses we learn how Sita too felt so happy in the company of Lord Ram that she too forgot everything about her home and family.

²The Chakor is so enamoured of the moon that it keeps its gaze fixed on the latter as soon as it rises in the eastern sky, and keeps looking at the moon as it travels across the firmament till the time it sets in the western horizon. Nothing else gives as much pleasure and joy to this bird as gazing at the moon, and while the moon is in the sky the Chakor forgets all its worries and pains.

Likewise, Sita would feel extremely contented and happy when she saw Lord Ram by her side, and she never felt the pain and grief of having lost her dear family members or the comforts of her home that she had to leave behind while coming to the forest. The company of Lord Ram gave her heart and mind such peace and happiness that she forgot everything else, and never recalled the comforts of home or the affection that she got from the members of her family, either at her paternal home at Janakpur, or at her in-laws' place at Ayodhya.]

नाह नेहु नित बढ़त बिलोकी । हरषित रहति दिवस जिमि कोकी ॥ ३ ॥
सिय मनु राम चरन अनुरागा । अवध सहस सम बनु प्रिय लागा ॥ ४ ॥

nāha nēhu nita bar̥hata bilōkī. haraṣita rahati divasa jimi kōkī. 3.
siya manu rāma carana anurāgā. avadha sahasa sama banu priya lāgā. 4.

Perceiving that Lord Ram loved her ever so much, and his affection for her was increasing day by day, Sita felt exhilarated in the same way as the female Chakvi bird would feel during the day time when she lives in the company of her male companion, the Chakva bird¹. (3)

Sita's mind and heart (i.e. her "Mana") were always lost in the thoughts of Lord Ram as she remained engrossed in having affection for the holy feet of Lord Ram so much so that as far as she was concerned the forest was as livable and comfortable as thousands of Ayodhya taken together². (4)

[Note—¹The female bird ruddy goose, called 'Chakvi', loves her male companion, the 'Chakva', so much that in his company she feels exceedingly happy. They stay

together the whole day, but when night comes they separate from each other, only to be reunited the next day. So, both feel the pain of separation, and hence they live a sorrowful life during the night, but as soon as they are reunited the next day, cheer comes back to them.

Similarly, Sita felt extremely happy in the company of Lord Ram like the Chakvi feels in the company of the Chakva during the day time.

²This was because her beloved Lord Ram had preferred the forest over Ayodhya, for the Lord discarded Ayodhya and came to live in the forest. It implied that the Lord liked the forest more than Ayodhya. Hence, like a dedicated wife and a true devotee of the Lord, Sita too liked what the Lord liked; she loved the forest thousands of times more than the city of Ayodhya.

An exactly similar idea that resonates with what has been said herein above is expressed by Kaushalya, the mother of Lord Ram, when she says: “Oh dear son, the forest is most fortunate and Ayodhya equally unfortunate, because you have decided to abandon the latter in favour of the former.” Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 56.

Likewise, Sumitra, the mother of Laxman, too has praised the forest, saying that wherever Lord Ram chooses to live that place becomes equivalent to Ayodhya itself. Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 74.

When Lord Ram was moving out of Ayodhya, the whole city decided to go with the Lord, as everyone proclaimed that they have nothing to do with Ayodhya if Lord Ram leaves it. Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 84.

The ordinary villagers too had a similar view—that wherever Lord Ram goes, that place is deemed to be auspicious and blessed. Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 122.]

परनकुटी प्रिय प्रियतम संग । प्रिय परिवारु कुरंग बिहंगा ॥ ५ ॥

सासु ससुर सम मुनितिय मुनिबर । असनु अमिअ सम कंद मूल फर ॥ ६ ॥

नाथ साथ साँथरी सुहाई । मयन सयन सय सम सुखदाई ॥ ७ ॥

लोकप होहिं बिलोकत जासू । तेहि कि मोहि सक बिषय बिलासू ॥ ८ ॥

paranakuṭī priya priyatama saṅgā. priya parivāru kuraṅga bihaṅgā. 5.
sāsu sasura sama munitiya munibara. asanu ami'a sama kanda mūla phara. 6.
nātha sātha sām̐tharī suhā'ī. mayana sayana saya sama sukhadā'ī. 7.
lōkapa hōhir̥m bilōkata jāsū. tēhi ki mōhi saka biṣaya bilāsū. 8.

{The following four verses further elaborate how Sita lived very happily and comfortably with Lord Ram in Chitrakoot.}

The thatched hut made of twigs and leaves for a comfortable dwelling, the affectionate company of her beloved husband who was always by her side, and the friendly deer (animals) and the birds of the forest became de facto family members of Sita. (5)

The sages and their wives acted as Sita's father-in law and mother-in-law respectively. The edible roots and stems, as well as the fruits that were available would be treated as the most delectable of viands by Sita (who thoroughly enjoyed partaking of them). (6)

The roughly sewed and coarsely made mattress from leaves and twigs upon which Sita and Lord Ram would rest was treated by her like a soft bed that she was accustomed to lie upon at home, as it gave her much comfort like the mattress upon which Kamdeo and Rati rested¹. (7)

[The poet concludes thus—] Can the material comforts and worldly charms cause any kind of temptation or allurements for someone (in this case Sita and Lord Ram) whose mere glance can transform or convert an ordinary person into Indra (the king of gods) or Lokpals (the custodians of different divisions of the world), that the lack of such comfort and charm would make them yearn for it, or they would feel ill at ease by the absence of any of the comforts and charms²? (8)

[Note—¹Here, Kamdeo is Lord Ram, and Rati, Kamdeo's consort, is Sita.

²The answer is 'no'. To wit, Lord Ram and Sita, who were personified forms of the Supreme Being and his Maya (which represents dynamic powers of the Lord; cosmic powers and energy that the Lord employs to do what he wants to do in this creation) respectively, could have created an artificial city of all comforts had they so wished. But no, such mundane and worldly things as a large palace to live in, a velvet-soft bed to sleep on, a meal of a variety of dishes to eat, a retinue of servants and attendants to serve them—none of these worldly things would tempt them.

It is like the case of an emperor or a multi-millionaire voluntarily renouncing comforts and pleasures of a pampered life of riches and abundance to which he was accustomed all along at the time he decides to lead a simple life of austerity and minimum needs. Would such a man be swayed if someone brings to him some kind of attractive thing that he had in abundance at his own home, and which he had voluntarily discarded while renouncing his attachment with the world and becoming a monk?

Similarly, whatever little was available to them in the forest was liked by Lord Ram and Sita, and they never yearned for the comforts and pleasures of things that they had voluntarily left behind in Ayodhya.]

दो०. सुमिरत रामहि तजहिं जन तृन सम बिषय बिलासु ।

रामप्रिया जग जननि सिय कछु न आचरजु तासु ॥ १४० ॥

dōhā.

sumirata rāmaḥi tajahim̐ jana tṛṇa sama biṣaya bilāsu.

rāmapriyā jaga janani siya kachu na ācaraju tāsu. 140.

When the devotees of Lord Ram remember the Lord and fix their attention on him, when they decide to follow the Lord in order to attain liberation and deliverance, emancipation and salvation, bliss and beatitude for their souls, they are able to cheerfully and voluntarily abandon, without the least effort, all sorts of worldly

temptations pertaining to its comforts and material charms, as if these things were as worthless and useless as a blade of grass¹, then say why would Sita not be able to do so when she was the dear wife of the Lord, remained close to him, and was the Mother of the world (because Lord Ram was the supreme Father of the world)².

To wit therefore, there is no wonder in it that Sita was not tempted by worldly charms. (Doha no. 140)

[Note—¹Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 84; (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 324.

²Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 51 (Lord Shiva's advice to Sati, his consort); (ii) Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 246 (declaration by wise kings in the assembly at Janakpur); (b) Ayodhya Kand, and (iii) Chanda line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 126 (sage Valmiki's statement conforming this fact).]

चौ०. सीय लखन जेहि बिधि सुखु लहहीं । सोइ रघुनाथ करहिं सोइ कहहीं ॥ १ ॥
कहहिं पुरातन कथा कहानी । सुनिहिं लखनु सिय अति सुखु मानी ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

sīya lakhana jēhi bidhi sukhu lahaḥīm. sō'i raghunātha karahīm sō'i kahahīm.

1.

kahahīm purātana kathā kahānī. sunahīm lakhanu siya ati sukhu mānī. 2.

In whatever way Sita and Laxman could get comfort and happiness, in whatever way they would be cheerful and joyful, Lord Ram, the Lord of the Raghus (raghunātha), would do it and say it¹. (1)

In order to entertain Laxman and Sita, and to keep their minds diverted and occupied, Lord Ram would narrate to them interesting stories, parables and anecdotes from ancient scriptures, such as the Purans². (2)

[Note—¹A very interesting observation is to be made here, one that usually goes unnoticed.

Lord Ram took upon himself all the pains and miseries of his devotees; the merciful and kind Lord would suffer himself but ensure that his devotees do not suffer; the Lord goes out of his way to see that his devotees are happy and cheerful; the Lord takes care of his devotees just like a mother would do for her infant child. Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 42.

This fact is particularly applicable to those who are very obedient to the Lord and are his ardent devotees, as well as to those who are contented with whatever they get as a blessing from Lord Ram, and have no one else in this world other than Lord Ram to whom they owe their complete allegiance, and to whom they are totally devoted. These facts have been expressly reiterated in Ram Charit Manas in its Uttar Kand: (i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 43; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 46; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precedes Doha no. 87.

There is not an iota of doubt that both Sita and Laxman were totally and completely devoted to Lord Ram; for them the Lord was the only one who mattered, and all else were secondary. Let us not forget that only Lord Ram was asked to go to the forest, but Sita and Laxman decided to sacrifice all their comforts and everything else in order to serve the Lord. Hence, it was Lord's duty and moral responsibility that he should always be vigilant to keep them happy and cheerful.

A very remarkable thing had happened during their travels through the forest, but it remains untold. What is it? The forest path was very rough and hard, and surely there were sharp stones and thorns strewn all around—for it was definitely not a paved street of a city, or one where petals would be spread to welcome a king. But if we closely examine the narration of the story of Ram Charit Manas, we will make a startling discovery—that neither Sita nor Laxman had a single prick from a thorn, not a single thorn pierced the sole of their feet! But what about Lord Ram? Yes, he had thorns pricking his feet, causing sores, and some even remained stuck in his soles even till the time the Lord was sitting on the throne of Ayodhya and was crowned a King. No one noticed it, but the 'Vedas', which are very careful in discerning the minutest of things and are analytical in their observations, had indeed taken cognizance of it, and when they came to offer their respects to the Lord at the time of his coronation, they had mentioned this fact—that the Lord has allowed and accepted the thorns to prick the soles of his feet while walking barefoot in the forest. It is clearly stated by the Vedas in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chanda line no. 15 that precedes Doha no. 13.

So, what do we deduce from this unusual phenomenon—that thorns pricked and caused sores in the feet of Lord Ram, but never touched Sita or Laxman who too walked on the same path—in the context of what has been said in the present verse we are reading presently? Well, the answer is plain and simple: "Lord Ram ensured that Sita and Laxman were subjected to no harm or sufferings, and the Lord took special care in this respect." To wit, Lord Ram allowed the thorns to do as much pricking and injuring they wished to do in accordance with their character and inherent nature to prick and wound others, but barred them from doing any mischief with Sita or Laxman! "Hark ye", Lord Ram told the thorns, "Be forewarned that if thou durst harm Sita or Laxman, if I learn that thou hast pricked their feet and caused a wound that hurts them, then I shalt exterminate thine species completely from the face of the earth. I am warning thee in advance not to act smart with my devotees."

There is no wonder and doubt that Lord Ram would have said something of this sort, by way of warning, to the deity who presided over the plant kingdom, for we shall read later on in the story that the guru of the gods too would warn Indra, the king of gods, not to play fool and do any kind of mischief with Lord Ram's devotees, for any such misadventure and foul play would backfire on him with devastating consequences for the perpetrator of such mischief whosoever he may be—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precedes Doha no. 218.

Let us extend our examination further and analyse an event narrated earlier more closely in the context of what has been said herein above. We have already read that while walking on the forest path, Lord Ram took the lead and walked ahead of Sita and Laxman, both of whom followed from behind. We also read that both Sita and Laxman avoided the footprints made by Lord Ram's feet on the dust on the path, walking in such a way that they never stepped on those footprints. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 123.

Well, can one imagine why this happened? Yes, the answer is easy in the context of the observations made above. Lord Ram walked in the front, ahead of Sita

and Laxman, to ensure that the path is clear and there is no danger for his devotees, Sita and Laxman, who were following him from behind. If Lord Ram got the wind that there was some danger ahead, the Lord would either tackle it quietly himself, or would Sita and Laxman be ready, at which warning Laxman would take guard from behind and Lord Ram from the front as they moved ahead, eliminating or brushing aside all dangers as they progressed.

Further, Lord Ram would invite the thorns and stones on the way to prick and hurt his feet if they so desire, it won't matter to him at all, but warned them to clear the path and move aside so that Sita and Laxman could pass through unharmed. The Lord told them that they are allowed to act in accordance with the characters that Nature has assigned to them as part of the wider picture of creation in which every single entity has its unique character, some good and some bad, and every entity has the equal right to exist. In the case of the thorn and the stone, this character was to prick and hurt, so they can go ahead with it; it is okay. But the Lord warned them that they should do whatever they pleased with him, for he is the Supreme Father of this creation and does not mind mischief created by one or two of his own off-springs, but they should not harm Sita and Laxman, as it would be tantamount to hurting the Lord's devotees, and this offense is unforgivable. Should the thorns and the stones dare to hurt either Sita or Laxman, the Lord warned their patron deities, he would exterminate them from the surface of earth.

That is why Sita and Laxman did not suffer from thorns pricking the soles of their feet, but thorns did stick in Lord Ram's feet.

My dear and most esteemed readers, just imagine how sweet and succulent these spiritual thoughts are, and how deep and profound are the many subtle spiritual messages that are embedded throughout the story of Lord Ram as narrated in Ram Charit Manas, which definitely entitles it to stand out and occupy a high pedestal of spiritualism, amongst all other versions of the Ramayana, by emphasizing on the stellar virtues of devotion and love for the Lord as an easy mean for attaining deliverance, emancipation, salvation, bliss, peace, beatitude and felicity in this world, and making the devotee feel carefree in a world full of cumbersome worries and endless problems.

Earlier we have read that Lord Vishnu, who is the primary cosmic form of Lord Ram, had promised sage Narad that the Lord would do only that which is good for the sage, and nothing to the contrary. This determination of the Lord, that he will always ensure welfare of his devotees irrespective of the consequences, led to developments that culminated in Lord Vishnu being cursed by none other but the beneficiary of the Lord's benevolent nature, for sage Narad himself cursed him to become a human being and suffer its consequences. Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 132; (ii) Doha no. 137 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede it.

²It clearly means that Lord Ram was highly learned in the scriptures, and had them on his finger-tips. He could easily recall countless stories, parables and anecdotes from ancient histories and scriptural texts, and keep Sita and Laxman busy by narrating to them interesting episodes, explaining their meanings and the morals behind these narratives to both of them. Hence, both Sita and Laxman learnt a lot during their stay in the forest with Lord Ram.

Earlier we have read that during his childhood days, as well as when the Lord grew up and married, he had attended regular sessions where the royal priest, sage Vasistha, would narrate stories from many scriptural texts. Lord Ram had such a

phenomenal and brilliant memory that once he heard anything, he would never forget it. {In this context, refer to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 204; (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 359; (b) Uttar Kand, (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 26.}

There are other instances also where we read that holding discourses on ancient texts as well as discussions on spiritual subjects was a routine means of passing time and discussing metaphysical subjects in a constructive way—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 226 (sage Vishwamitra spent time in such discourse at Janakpur); (b) Ayodhya Kand, (ii) Doha no. 237 (Lord Ram and other sages sit in a group and tell stories and histories from the Vedas and Purans); (c) Uttar Kand, (iii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 36—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 37 and verses that follow it (discussion between Bharat and Lord Ram, where the Lord expounds upon the qualities of true saints); (iv) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 43 along with verses that follow it (where Lord Ram outlines the importance of Bhakti, or devotion, to the subjects of Ayodhya).]

जब जब रामु अवध सुधि करहीं । तब तब बारि बिलोचन भरहीं ॥ ३ ॥
 सुमिरि मातु पितु परिजन भाई । भरत सनेहु सीलु सेवकाई ॥ ४ ॥
 कृपासिंधु प्रभु होहिं दुखारी । धीरजु धरहिं कुसमउ बिचारी ॥ ५ ॥

jaba jaba rāmu avadha sudhi karahīm. taba taba bāri bilōcana bharahīm. 3.
 sumiri mātu pitu parijana bhāī. bharata sanēhu sīlu sēvakāī. 4.
 krpāsindhu prabhu hōhim dukhārī. dhīraju dharahīm kusama'u bicārī. 5.

{Even though Lord Ram never allowed Sita and Laxman to feel sad and to remember their family or the comforts of Ayodhya, and ensured that they were always happy and cheerful, but he himself would often feel sad and poignant whenever he remembered Ayodhya and its citizens, or his family remembers. This is because Lord Ram, who was exceptionally merciful, compassionate, kind, benevolent and magnanimous, took upon himself the burden of bearing all the grief, pain and sadness of separation from Ayodhya and its devoted citizens, as well as the family members, but ensured that Sita and Laxman were spared this agony.}

Whenever Lord Ram remembered Ayodhya (and its citizens, the love, affection and devotion that they had for him), on all such occasions tears filled his eyes. (3)

Whenever Lord Ram remembered his mother, father, kith and kin, brothers, and especially Bharat's love and affection for him, his good character and courteous manners, his devotion for the Lord and his eagerness to serve him, --- (4)

--- On all such occasions, Lord Ram, who was an ocean of mercy, kindness, compassion and benevolence, would feel sad, remorseful and poignant¹.

But he would immediately recover himself, exercising self control and courage by realizing that the time was not favourable, and hence it is futile to lament and regret at things over which one cannot have any control. (5)

[Note—¹Lord Ram was not concerned about the physical comforts that he enjoyed at Ayodhya, and which he missed now in the forest, but what moved him much, and made him so emotional, were the thoughts of how much everyone in Ayodhya must be suffering in grief due to their separation from him; how they were spending life as a burden in his absence. Lord Ram's character emphasized here—that he was an ocean of mercy, compassion, kindness, benevolence etc.—point in this direction. In this context, refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 85.

A similar idea is expressed in Geetawali Ramayan, Sundar Kand, verse no. 11, stanza no. 1.

This episode gives us a subtle message: that all of us are subjected to different kinds of pain and sufferings in life, and there are multiple reasons or causes for them, the majority of which are unknown to us, so it is unwise to blame the Lord God for our miseries and sufferings. A wise person would stay calm under adversities, as every dark night is sure to be followed by day light. Fretting and fuming over bad times only aggravate sufferings, never alleviate them.]

लखि सिय लखनु बिकल होइ जाहीं । जिमि पुरुषहि अनुसर परिछाहीं ॥ ६ ॥
 प्रिया बंधु गति लखि रघुनंदनु । धीर कृपाल भगत उर चंदनु ॥ ७ ॥
 लगे कहन कछु कथा पुनीता । सुनि सुखु लहहिं लखनु अरु सीता ॥ ८ ॥

lakhi siya lakhanu bikala hō'i jāhīm. jimi puruṣahi anusara parichāhīm. 6.
 priyā bandhu gati lakhi raghunandanu. dhīra kṛpāla bhagata ura candanu. 7.
 lagē kahana kachu kathā punītā. suni sukhu lahahīm lakhanu aru sītā. 8.

However, when Sita and Laxman saw Lord Ram in a sad and remorseful mood, they too were overcome with the same emotions in the same way as a shadow always follows a person.

[To wit, when Laxman and Sita observed that their beloved Lord Ram was sad, they felt anguished and distraught themselves, for they would not be moved or affected by any kind of sufferings or miseries, no matter how grave, serious or profound they might be which they would experience personally, but it was beyond their ability to cope with the sight of their beloved Lord feeling miserable in the least; they could not at all bear to see their beloved Lord unhappy and sad.] (6)

When, on the other hand, Lord Ram, the exalted son of the illustrious family of king Raghu (raghunanda), saw Sita and Laxman feeling sad and gloomy, he understood the reason why they are sad, and hence he would immediately control his own feelings and overcome his despondent and remorseful mood, for the Lord was very resilient and patient, and he was always like a moon vis-à-vis the Mana (heart and mind) of a devotee, for the Lord would always ensure that the devotee gets immense peace and comfort by his presence just like the moon's light soothes the nerves of a harried person. (7)

In order to cheer up Sita and Laxman, the Lord would immediately control his own sadness and overcome his gloomy thoughts, cheer up, change the mood, and start some pleasant conversation with them, such as narrating some interesting story,

parable or anecdote which would lighten up the spirits of Sita and Laxman, and they would become happy once again.¹ (8)

[Note—¹When Lord Ram observed that his sadness and gloomy thoughts have made Sita and Laxman sad and gloomy too, he would immediately check himself and cheer up. The Lord would immediately realize that his sad countenance and gloomy emotions have reflected on his external behaviour, which in turn has affected Sita and Laxman very adversely, for they too are feeling dejected and forlorn. Since Lord Ram always took extra care that Sita and Laxman are happy, and when he found them unhappy, and discovered that the cause of their unhappiness is his own sadness and remorseful countenance that is reflected in his gloomy behaviour, the Lord immediately took a deep breath and made a course correction. He would immediately cheer up, smile, glance lovingly at both of them, and start some pleasant conversation with Sita and Laxman to divert their attention from the gloomy thoughts and make them cheer up too.]

दो०. रामु लखन सीता सहित सोहत परन निकेत ।
जिमि बासव बस अमरपुर सची जयंत समेत ॥ १४१ ॥

dōhā.

rāmu lakhana sītā sahita sōhata parana nikēta.
jimi bāsava basa amarapura sacī jayanta samēta. 141.

In this aforesaid manner, Lord Ram dwelt happily in his thatched dwelling with Sita and Laxman in the same way as Indra, the king of gods, lives with his consort named Sachi and son Jayant in his city of Amravati (in the heavens). (Doha no. 141)

[Note—¹In this verse, Lord Ram is ‘Indra’; Sita is ‘Sachi’; and Laxman is their son ‘Jayant’. Hence, it is clear that Lord Ram and Sita treated Laxman as their ‘son’. Laxman too served them and loved them as he would his parents. This relationship was in accordance with the advice Sumitra, Laxman’s mother, had given him—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 74; and (ii) Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 75.]

चौ०. जोगवहिं प्रभु सिय लखनहिं कैसें । पलक बिलोचन गोलक जैसें ॥ १ ॥
सेवहिं लखनु सीय रघुबीरहि । जिमि अबिबेकी पुरुष सरीरहि ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

jōgavahim prabhu siya lakhanahim kaisēm. palaka bilōcana gōlaka jaisēm. 1.
sēvahim lakhanu sīya raghubīrahi. jimi abibēkī puruṣa sarīrahi. 2.

Lord Ram would protect and take care of Sita and Laxman in the same way as the eyelids protect and take care of the eyeball¹. (1)

On his part, Laxman served Lord Ram and Sita in the same way as a foolish person would serve his gross body and yearn for gratification of its sense organs². (2)

[Note—¹At the slightest hint of danger to the eye, the eyelids would immediately shut down and close the door of the vault where the eyeballs are located. Similarly, Lord Ram was always alert that no harm should come to Sita and Laxman in the least.

²A foolish person does not understand that his body is perishable and not his permanent identity; that no matter how hard he tries to satisfy the needs of his sense organs, they will never be contented, and go on wanting something new and more.

To wit, such a foolish person would spend all his energy, time and resources in trying to take care of the needs of his body inspite of being told that the body is perishable, and he will never find peace if he tries to satisfy the needs of the body completely.

This analogy is used here merely to stress that Laxman was very eager to serve Lord Ram and Sita; all his time was spent in serving them faithfully, diligently and obediently, always trying his best to keep Lord Ram and Sita happy in every possible way he could.

Remember: Laxman's mother, Sumitra, has ordered him precisely to do so—that he should be very diligent and careful in obediently serving both Lord Ram and Sita in such a way that they are always happy. Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 74; (ii) Chanda line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 75.]

एहि बिधि प्रभु बन बसहि सुखारी । खग मृग सुर तापस हितकारी ॥ ३ ॥
कहेउँ राम बन गवनु सुहावा । सुनहु सुमंत्र अवध जिमि आवा ॥ ४ ॥

ēhi bidhi prabhu bana basahim sukhārī. khaga mṛga sura tāpasa hitakārī. 3.
kahē'um' rāma bana gavanu suhāvā. sunahu sumantra avadha jimi āvā. 4.

In this way (as narrated in the preceding verses), Lord Ram, who was always friendly towards birds, animals, gods and ascetics, and thought of their welfare, lived happily in the forest (amongst them). (3)

[Tulsidas says—] 'I have narrated the delightful and pleasing episode of how and why Lord Ram went to the forest¹. Let me pause this narration for a while, and now listen to how Sumantra came back to Ayodhya². (4)

[Note—¹Yes indeed, the narration of Lord Ram travelling to the forest is exceedingly pleasing and a provider of joy as it tells us how it delighted the hearts and minds of countless souls who met the Lord on the way, for all of them were enthralled by the Lord's charm, not only physical but spiritual as well, felt that their lives have been fruitful for having had the good fortune to see the Lord's divine form that granted them spiritual joy, happiness and bliss like they had never experienced before.

²Refer to Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 100 where Lord Ram had sent Sumantra back to Ayodhya, and then the Lord came to the bank of river Ganges in order to cross it to the other side and proceed on his way to the forest.

Now, we shall pick up that thread and see what happened after Sumantra turned back to go to Ayodhya, leaving Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman behind.]

फिरेउ निषादु प्रभुहि पहुँचाई । सचिव सहित रथ देखेसि आई ॥ ५ ॥

मंत्री बिकल बिलोकि निषादू । कहि न जाइ जस भयउ बिषादू ॥ ६ ॥

phirē'u niṣādu prabhuhi pahumcā'ī. saciva sahita ratha dēkhēsi ā'ī. 5.
mantrī bikala bilōki niṣādū. kahi na jā'i jasa bhaya'u biṣādū. 6.

Guha Nishad returned after escorting Lord Ram (till the banks of river Yamuna, beyond sage Bhardwaj's hermitage)¹.

On his way back, Nishad saw the chief minister (i.e. Sumantra) with his chariot somewhere near from the place from where he was asked by Lord Ram to return². (5)

Nishad found the chief minister (Sumantra) in an absolutely perplexed and agitated state; he was so confounded, remorseful and sad that it is not possible to describe his physical state or the state of his mind.³ (6)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 111, along with Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that follow it.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 99—to Chaupai line no. that precedes Doha no. 100.

³Lord Ram had asked Sumantra to return from the bank of river Ganges, on the 2nd day of his leaving Ayodhya. What happened after that?

Sumantra was absolutely crestfallen, confused and distraught; he did not know what to do and what not to. Many thoughts swirled in his mind: should he discard all signs of his being a chief minister of the great kingdom of Ayodhya, and become an anonymous recluse instead, proceed to an unknown place and either spend the rest of his life as a mendicant or return home after Lord Ram comes back; or should he send some urgent message to the capital city and ask for support staff while he would secretly pursue Lord Ram from behind; should he return to Ayodhya to face ignominy and shame at having failed in his mission, which was in fact a diplomatic failure that he had never experienced in his long career as a mighty kingdom's chief minister; what answer would he give Dasrath who was surely waiting for him to return with Lord Ram; how will he cope with and manage the horrors of the consequences that are bound to unfold as soon as the news of his returning empty handed spread in Ayodhya; how will he handle the accompanying chaos and gloom that would overwhelm the city and its administrative machinery. "Oh God", thought Sumantra, "I am doomed; I am done with."

The gloomy thoughts that churned Sumantra's mind and caused immense perplexity to him, leaving him bewildered and completely out of his wits, have been narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 144—to Doha no. 146 a little while later in our reading.

The sight of agitated of the horses of the chariot, their expression of grief at being forced to be separated from their beloved Lord Ram and having to live a life without him, added to Sumantra's worries and grief.

So, perplexed and confounded, Sumantra parked his chariot by the side of the road some distance away from river Ganges, and sat there forlorn and in a despondent mood, gravely brooding and lamenting and grieving at his fate.

One other reason why Sumantra parked his chariot instead of returning to Ayodhya straight away from the banks of river Ganges is that he had hoped that Nishad would somehow persuade Lord Ram to return. So he thought to wait and see.

It was in this state that Guha Nishad found him while returning home to Sringeripur.]

राम राम सिय लखन पुकारी । परेउ धरनितल ब्याकुल भारी ॥ ७ ॥
देखि दखिन दिसि हय हिहिनाहीं । जनु बिनु पंख बिहग अकुलाहीं ॥ ८ ॥

rāma rāma siya lakhana pukārī. parē'u dharanitala byākula bhārī. 7.
dēkhi dakhina disi haya hihināhīm. janu binu paṅkha bihaga akulāhīm. 8.

No sooner Sumantra saw Nishad returning alone, but he exclaimed in utter despair 'Ram-Ram, Sita and Laxman' in a woeful manner, and fell down in a swoon on the ground¹. (7)

The horses of the chariot gazed in the south direction (in which they had last seen Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman going, and from which direction Nishad was returning) and neighed wildly in a painful and anguished tone. Their condition was so agitated and sorrowful as if birds have had their wings cut². (8)

[Note—¹Sumantra had waited in the hope that Nishad would somehow persuade Lord Ram to return; so he kept his hopes alive and waited for some good news. This is also one of the reasons that he had parked his chariot by the side of the road instead of returning to Ayodhya straight away from the bank of river Ganges.

So, as soon as he saw Nishad returning alone, all his hopes were dashed. He called out in despair, "Oh my dear Lord Ram, oh Sita, oh Laxman", and fell unconscious out of shock.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 99.

²The condition of the horses of the chariot was completely miserable; their neighing and sorrowful countenance would have pierced the heart of the beholder like a spear. What could these poor and helpless animals do except to wail and lament gravely to express their sadness in the way they could? Perhaps, had they not been tightly tied to a tree by the side of the road, they would have galloped away in the direction Lord Ram took. But poor creatures, what could they do?

In this context, refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 99 along with Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it.]

दो०. नहिं तृन चरहिं न पिअहिं जलु मोचहिं लोचन बारि ।
 व्याकुल भए निषाद सब रघुबर बाजि निहारि ॥ १४२ ॥

dōhā.

nahim tṛṇa carahim na pi'ahim jalu mōcahim lōcana bāri.
 byākula bha'ē niṣāda saba raghubara bāji nihāri. 142.

The horses of the chariot would not graze grass, nor would they drink any water. Tears streamed down their eyes (in torrents, like from a waterfall).

Nishad was very distraught and dismayed when he observed the condition of the horses of Lord Ram¹. (Doha no. 142)

[Note—¹A very poignant observation that sums up the intensity of grief and the profundity of loss that overwhelmed and emotionally affected everyone upon their separation from Lord Ram has been made earlier in the context of the horses—in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that follows Doha no. 99.

It is observed here that “when one sees the sorrowful and distraught condition of these animals (i.e. the horses), one would be left wondering how the people of Ayodhya, such as its citizens, as well as the members of Lord Ram’s family, would survive without the Lord; how would they cope with the agony and the grief of separation from their beloved Lord Ram?”

The condition of the horses has been described further herein below in Doha no. 143 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede it.]

चौ०. धरि धीरजु तब कहइ निषादू । अब सुमंत्र परिहरहु बिषादू ॥ १ ॥
 तुम्ह पंडित परमारथ ग्याता । धरहु धीर लखि बिमुख बिधाता ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

dhari dhīraju taba kaha'i niṣādū. aba sumantra pariharahu biṣādū. 1.
 tumha paṇḍita paramāratha gyātā. dharahu dhīra lakhi bimukha bidhātā. 2.

Guha Nishad was extremely disturbed and emotionally upset when he saw the pitiable condition of Sumantra and the horses of the chariot¹, yet he showed exemplary wisdom and prudence by exercising control over himself, and not get carried away by emotions and be swept by waves of sadness and despondency as it would serve no purpose. So, Nishad recovered himself and gathered his wits together to console Sumantra, to support, comfort and encourage him.

Nishad said to Sumantra: ‘Sumantra, you should cease grieving and lamenting now as it is useless at this juncture, and would serve no constructive purpose either. (1)

You are wise and sagacious in every matter; you have an in-depth knowledge of what the scriptures say vis-à-vis fate, destiny and providence².

So therefore, have courage, show patience and resilience at a time when the Creator seems to be unfavourable³. (2)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 142 herein above. The poignant situation has been described in notes appended to the above verses.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 95.

³Nishad put his hands on the shoulders of grieving Sumantra, softly patted him, and spoke in a friendly and encouraging tone like a true friend should when he finds his companion perplexed and distraught, and on the verge of emotional collapse:

“My dear friend, listen. Let us become practical. What great service would thou doest to anybody by sitting here with gloomily with a remorseful mood? Thou havest a great responsibility on thine shoulders, and everyone now looks upon thee in this extremely testing time. It wouldst be thine greatest service to Lord Ram if thou pick up the gauntlet at this adverse juncture and take command to steer the ship safely to its harbour. My friend, how glad and happy and grateful wilt thy Lord Ram be when he learns that thou havest lived upto thine reputation and responsibilities in the absence of the Lord by taking care of Ayodhya, its people and the royal family, all of whom would be like a lost ship in case thou buckle under the weight of guilt and suffer emotionally that thou havest failed in thine mission to bring Lord Ram back. Remember that everyone is bound with his own fate, destiny and providence, and that whatever the gracious Lord God does is always for the good, though it seems the opposite at times.

See, Lord Ram treats thee as he wouldst treat his own father*1, and king Dasrath regards thee as his close friend*2. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, *1= (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 39; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 96; *2= Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 81.}

King Dasrath is in such a mental state of shock and despondency at present due to this unforeseen calamity that has descended on Ayodhya with Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman being driven out of the kingdom that he will not be able to look after administrative and other routine affairs of this mighty kingdom, and at this juncture if thou too shouldst kneel down, please understand the untold misery and chaos and anarchy that would spread everywhere. There is an additional fear of enemies attacking by exploiting the void. No, no, my dear brother, this should never happen while thou art here.

You see—by having courage and grit, by showing resilience and wisdom, thou wouldst be able to see the dawn of that fine day when Lord Ram returns happily to Ayodhya, while surrendering to adversity and losing hope and courage will not only be a cowardly act for a great and wise man of thine stature, but wouldst also pain Lord Ram when he learns of it because he has great confidence in you. Remember: The Lord has entrusted thee with some particular responsibility, and thou must live up to it. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 96.}

Hence, friend and brother, get up, and be bold and courageous. Show the world by thine example how one ought to behave when one is surrounded by a sea of adversities from all sides. Grieving, lamenting, shying away from responsibilities, falling prey to uncertainties and despondency do not behove thee.”]

बिबिध कथा कहि कहि मृदु बानी । रथ बैठारेउ बरबस आनी ॥ ३ ॥

सोक सिथिल रथ सकड़ न हाँकी । रघुबर बिरह पीर उर बाँकी ॥ ४ ॥

bibidha kathā kahi kahi mṛdu bānī. ratha baiṭhārē'u barabasa ānī. 3.
sōka sithila ratha saka'i nā hām'kī. raghubara biraha pīra ura bām'kī. 4.

In order to help Sumantra recover emotionally, Nishad cited various anecdotes and legendary stories from the scriptures in a sweet tone¹.

He used some mild force with a lot of tact and persuasion to make Sumantra come and sit on the chariot against his will. (3)

But Sumantra was so emotionally disturbed and gloomy in mood due to remorse and sadness that though made to sit on the chariot, yet he was not able to drive it, because the sorrow of separation from Lord Ram had acted as a sharp spear that had caused a deep wound in his heart and mind and sub-conscience so much so that his body was limp as if suffering from some serious illness. (4)

[Note—¹We have read earlier that Lord Ram had also employed a similar method to calm Sumantra's agitation down—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precede Doha no. 95.]

चरफराहिं मग चलहिं न घोरे । बन मृग मनहुं आनि रथ जोरे ॥ ५ ॥
अढुकि परहिं फिरि हेरहिं पीछें । राम बियोगि बिकल दुख तीछें ॥ ६ ॥

carapharāhiṁ maga calahiṁ na ghōrē. bana mṛga manahum'āni ratha jōrē. 5.
arḥuki parahiṁ phiri hērahiṁ pīchēm. rāma biyōgi bikala dukha tīchēm. 6.

The condition of the horses was appalling and they were extremely agitated; they fretted and fumed, stomping their feet on the ground, and becoming highly fidgety, they refused to move ahead (in the direction of Ayodhya), as if some wild animals of the forest (who are not accustomed to being harnessed to a chariot) have been forcibly brought and tied to the chariot against their will (leading them to try their best to break free from this captivity and run away). (5)

When compelled to move forward, they would go a few steps and halt, stumbling and falling on the ground even as they looked behind them (in the south direction where they last saw Lord Ram going to the forest), for the grief and sorrow of separation from Lord Ram had seriously affected these poor creatures¹. (6)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 99; (ii) Doha no. 142 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it.]

जो कह रामु लखनु बैदेही । हिंकरि हिंकरि हित हेरहिं तेही ॥ ७ ॥
बाजि बिरह गति कहि किमि जाती । बिनु मनि फनिक बिकल जेहि भाँती ॥ ८ ॥

jō kaha rāmu lakhanu baidēhī. hīmkari hīmkari hita hērahīm tēhī. 7.
bāji biraha gati kahi kimi jātī. binu mani phanika bikala jēhi bhāmṭī. 8.

If someone uttered the words ‘Ram-Laxman-Sita (Vaidehi)’ and the horses heard it being said, they would immediately start neighing in a remorseful tone and look intently at the speaker with grief in their eyes. (7)

The poignant and pitiful condition of the horses was so appalling that it is not possible to describe it, for they reminded one of a hooded serpent that has lost its ‘mani’¹. (8)

[Note—¹The “Mani” is a luminescent sac present on the hood of a species of serpents which, according to classical literature, serves to show light to the reptile when it ventures out from its hole in the darkness of night in search of food. The sac is filled with a vicious fluid that is secreted from the subcutaneous glands present on the skin of the hood of the serpent, dries up, and looks like a gem or a pearl lodged on the top of the hood.

It is a rare thing in nature, and it believed that the serpent would go blind if it is deprived of this Mani. In case this luminescent sac falls off due to some accident, or is taken away by poachers, the serpent would beat its head on the ground and die of grief. And even it somehow survives for the time being, it would be a very painful life, and eventually it would die of hunger and grief because it cannot see anything without the Mani.

The pitiable condition of the horses of the chariot is compared to this utterly miserable and hopeless condition of the serpent that has lost its mani.

Even king Dasrath has cited this example when he told Kaikeyi that he won’t be able to live without Lord Ram just as a hooded serpent is not able to survive for long without its Mani—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 33; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 154.]

दो०. भयउ निषादु बिषादबस देखत सचिव तुरंग ।
बोलि सुसेवक चारि तब दिए सारथी संग ॥ १४३ ॥
dōhā.

bhaya'u niṣādu biṣādabasa dēkhata saciva turaṅga.
bōli susēvaka cāri taba di'ē sārathī saṅga. 143.

Guha Nishad was extremely distressed and appalled himself when he saw the miserable and most pitiable condition of the chief minister (i.e. Sumantra) and the horses of the chariot.

He (Nishad) summoned four of his good and trusted kinsmen, and asked them to accompany the charioteer (Sumantra)¹ (and escort him to Ayodhya) (Doha no. 143)

[Note—¹Nishad realized that Sumantra was not in a fit state of mind to drive the chariot safely back to Ayodhya. He was apprehensive that in his distress Sumantra might commit some untoward incident that would disastrous.

Lord Ram had shown so much respect and affection for Nishad, even calling the latter his friend, that it now became incumbent upon Nishad to live up to his responsibility and duties towards Lord Ram. He told himself that he cannot leave

Sumantra alone, he cannot trust Sumantra that he would go back to Ayodhya safely, and so he called four of his trusted fellow-men and asked them to escort the chariot safely to the capital city of Ayodhya.]

चौ०. गुह सारथिहि फिरेउ पहुँचाई । बिरहु बिषादु बरनि नहिं जाई ॥ १ ॥
चले अवध लेइ रथहि निषादा । होहिं छनहिं छन मगन बिषादा ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

guha sārathihi phirē'u pahumčāī. birahu biṣādu barani nahim jāī. 1
calē avadha lē'i rathahi niṣādā. hōhim chanahim chana magana biṣādā. 2.

Guha Nishad escorted the charioteer (i.e. Sumantra) till the borders of his domain (Sringeripur) and bid him good-bye, even as both of them were so intensely affected by sorrows, distress and grief of separation (from each other as well as from Lord Ram) that their appalling emotional condition of misery and despondency cannot be described in words. (1)

Meanwhile, the four escorts of the Nishad community that Guha had sent with Sumantra, took charge of the chariot and drove it towards the city of Ayodhya, even as they themselves were overcome with gloom and distress at the sad developments. (2)

सोच सुमंत्र बिकल दुख दीना । धिग जीवन रघुबीर बिहीना ॥ ३ ॥
रहिहि न अंतहुँ अधम सरीरु । जसु न लहेउ बिछुरत रघुबीरु ॥ ४ ॥

sōca sumantra bikala dukha dīnā. dhiga jīvana raghubīra bihīnā. 3.
rahihi na antahum'adhama sarīrū. jasu na lahē'u bichurata raghubīrū. 4.

On the way back to Ayodhya, Sumantra sat on the chariot plunged in remorse, with a despondent and sad mood, with gloomy thoughts swirling wildly in his mind, causing intense emotional distress to his heart, and leaving him perplexed and out of his wits.

He brooded and thought to himself thus: 'Shame to my life if I manage to survive in the absence of Lord Ram (raghubīra). (3)

After all, this gross body is mortal and would perish one or the other day. So, this being the case, why did not this sinful body not die no sooner than it had to suffer the agony of separation from Lord Ram (for then it would have gained great respect, and the world would have recognized my true love for Lord Ram)¹. (4)

[Note—¹We shall read soon that this is exactly what had happened to king Dasrath, for no sooner he learnt that Lord Ram has not come back, but he died grieving for the Lord, which immortalized his love for Lord Ram.

Sumantra laments that he did not achieve immortality and fame as being true in his affection and love for Lord Ram just like Dasrath would achieve later on.

It ought to be noted here that Guha Nishad was wise in understanding this state of mind of Sumantra when he decided to send four kinsmen to escort him to the gates of the city of Ayodhya, for Nishad feared for the worse that Sumantra might collapse and die on the way.]

भए अजस अघ भाजन प्राणा । कवन हेतु नहिं करत पयाना ॥ ५ ॥

अहह मंद मनु अवसर चूका । अजहुँ न हृदय होत दुइ टूका ॥ ६ ॥

bha'ē ajasa agha bhājana prānā. kavana hētu nahim karata payānā. 5.
ahaha manda manu avasara cūkā. ajahum'na hṛdaya hōta du'i tūkā. 6.

My Pran (life forces inside the body that keep it alive) have invited great ignominy and ill-repute on itself as well as on me, for I wonder why they are not exiting my body even now, and forcing it to live on. (5)

Alas; alack-a-day! Woe to my cursed Mana (i.e. my heart and mind) that it had missed the opportunity earlier (to attain peace and bliss as well as immortality and fame by collapsing and letting me die), and it still does not break asunder and crack into two (under the unbearable weight of misery and sorrow that accompany the grief of separation from Lord Ram).' (6)

मीजि हाथ सिरु धुनि पछिताई । मनहुँ कृपन धन रासि गवाँई ॥ ७ ॥

बिरिद बाँधि बर बीरु कहाई । चलेउ समर जनु सुभट पराई ॥ ८ ॥

mīji hātha siru dhuni pachitā'ī. manahum'krpana dhana rāsi gavā'ī. 7.
birida bām'dhi bara bīru kahā'ī. calē'u samara janu subhaṭa parā'ī. 8.

Sumantra wrung his hands and beat his head in utter distress and lamented gravely as if a miser has lost a great treasure that he had hoarded for long¹. (7)

It was also like the ironic case of a person who claims to be a gallant and brave warrior who never turns his back in the battle-field, but when the time comes one day to prove his mettle and gallantry in the face of the enemy, he turns his back from combat and returns shamefully from the battle-field (instead of dying a brave death like a true warrior)². (8)

[Note—¹A miser loves his hoard of money so much that if he loses it by some ill fate, he would grieve and lament for the loss gravely as if the whole world was lost for him. Losing his family, his kith and kin, his name and reputation, even his health and anything else besides, would not ruffle him as much as the loss of his cherished treasures stowed away in a cellar. So though the miser may live a miserable life full of grief at the loss of his treasures, instead of committing suicide and putting an end to his life-long miseries, Sumantra too would be forced to live and bear with the pain of great loss of face by surviving the agony accompanying separation from Lord Ram, instead of dying immediately.

In this context, refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 99.

²To wit, in the case of Sumantra, the cause of the greatest bewilderment and shame for him was that while on the one hand he professed great love and affection for Lord Ram, and on the other hand he would prefer to live and not die in grief at separation from the Lord. He failed to prove his true and professed love and affection for Lord Ram by making the ultimate sacrifice of dying, just like king Dasrath would successfully do a little while later.]

दो०. बिप्र बिबेकी बेदबिद संमत साधु सुजाति ।
जिमि धोखें मदपान कर सचिव सोच तेहि भाँति ॥ १४४ ॥
dōhā.

bipra bibēkī bēdabida sammata sādhu sujāti.
jimi dhōkhēm madapāna kara saciva sōca tēhi bhāmṭi. 144.

[Another example is cited here to show how regretful and remorseful Sumantra felt at that time.]

The condition of the chief minister (Sumantra) was just like the case of a person who is otherwise upright and lives in accordance with the principles advised in the Vedas (scriptures), who is saintly and pious in all respects, and who has a high birth and excellent morals, but who mistakenly commits a grave sin by falling prey to deceit and made to drink an intoxicating liquid such as wine (which is prohibited for such persons)—which, when discovered by him, would make his heart sink within him, making him utterly dismayed, crestfallen, sorrowful, remorseful and distressed, for he had been cheated and forced to commit an error unwillingly and unknowingly, but he does not know how to atone for his sin now¹. (Doha no. 144)

[Note—¹This person wails and laments gravely, as all the troubles he had taken and strenuous efforts he had made throughout his life in order to live auspiciously and in accordance to the principles of his religion, have all been made null and void by a single act of carelessness or negligence on his part—such as his drinking wine. He would literally die of grief; he would be shocked and depressed beyond measure; he would hope that the earth splits and devours him.

The mental and emotional state of Sumantra was like this aforesaid person. He did not know what to do or say or think.]

चौ०. जिमि कुलीन तिय साधु सयानी । पतिदेवता करम मन बानी ॥ १ ॥
रहै करम बस परिहरि नाहू । सचिव हृदयँ तिमि दारुन दाहू ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

jimi kulīna tiya sādhu sayānī. patidēvatā karama mana bānī. 1.
rahai karama basa parihari nāhū. saciva hṛdayamṛtimi dārūna dāhū. 2.

[Some other instances are cited here to give an idea of how greatly dismayed and distressed Sumantra was.]

Just like the case of a noble lady born in a good family, who has excellent character and virtues of a saintly person, who is loyal to her husband and treats him with reverence as one would treat God, --- (1)

--- But due to some irony of ill-fate she is driven by misfortunes to have company of another man (other than her husband).

Upon realization of her mistake later on, she is filled with an intense sense of guilt and shame, and is overwhelmed with remorse and regret—the condition of the chief minister (Sumantra) was just like this lady as he lamented and grieved remorsefully¹. (2)

[Note—¹This lady would prefer to die than show her shameful face to the world. Sumantra too would have preferred death than to live with the ignominy of not being able to bring Lord Ram back from the forest inspite of the specific commission to do so from king Dasrath, which would put to question his fame and reputation as an expert negotiator and diplomat of a great kingdom who could navigate his way through toughest of situations and turn the tide in his favour. But on this occasion, he had failed miserably. For a professional like Sumantra, there is nothing worse and more shameful than abject failure in the domain in which he is believed to be an expert.]

लोचन सजल डीठि भइ थोरी । सुनइ न श्रवन बिकल मति भोरी ॥ ३ ॥
सूखहिं अधर लागि मुँह लाटी । जिउ न जाइ उर अवधि कपाटी ॥ ४ ॥

lōcana sajala dīṭhi bha'i thōrī. suna'i na śravana bikala mati bhōrī. 3.
sūkhahim adhara lāgi muṁha lāṭī. ji'u na jā'i ura avadhi kapāṭī. 4.

Sumantra was so dumbfounded and paralysed that his jaws stuck together (i.e. he could not open his mouth, either to speak, eat or drink anything), he could not listen to any thing being said to him, and his mind was in a state of delirium, being confused beyond measure. (3)

His lips were parched dry; saliva dribbled from the corners of his mouth. But unfortunately life would not ebb from his body, because a symbolic door representing the period of Lord Ram's forest exile keeps it shut inside¹. (4)

[Note—¹Sumantra showed all signs of impending coma, the state of unconsciousness that precedes death. He had already developed paralytic symptoms. But what prevented his death? The answer is this: the hope of seeing Lord Ram once again at the end of the fourteen years. This single thought acted as a door to shut in his life-forces, and stop them from exiting his ailing body.]

बिबरन भयउ न जाइ निहारी । मारेसि मनहुँ पिता महतारी ॥ ५ ॥
हानि गलानि बिपुल मन व्यापी । जमपुर पंथ सोच जिमि पापी ॥ ६ ॥

bibarana bhaya'u na jā'i nihārī. mārēsi manahum̐ pitā mahatārī. 5.
hāni galāni bipula mana byāpī. jamapura pantha sōca jimi pāpī. 6.

He became pale, and his physical and emotional condition was so pitiful and traumatic that one could not see him (as it made the beholder wince in shock), for it resembled the horrifying mental condition of a person who has killed his own parents (mother and father; “pitā mahatārī”)¹. (5)

Sumantra was overcome with grief that comes with a sense of profound loss as he lamented and regretted remorsefully like a person on his way to hell who reflects on the evil deeds of his life that have paved the way for him to go to hell, with no chance to rectify them when it was too late². (6)

[Note—¹When a person kills his parents in a fit of madness, his face becomes contorted and demonic in appearance, and he sinks into deep depression. He becomes very dangerous at that point of time, and no one can predict what he would do next. Even a causal glance at this person would send shivers down the spine of the beholder—for after murdering his parents, this person personifies Satan himself.

²All these examples are cited to show how excessively sad and full of remorse Sumantra had been while returning to Ayodhya.]

बचनु न आव हृदयँ पछिताई । अवध काह मैं देखब जाई ॥ ७ ॥
राम रहित रथ देखिहि जोई । सकुचिहि मोहि बिलोकत सोई ॥ ८ ॥

bacanu na āva hr̥dayam̐ pachitā'ī. avadha kāha maiṁ dēkhaba jā'ī. 7.
rāma rahita ratha dēkhihi jō'ī. sakucihi mōhi bilōkata sō'ī. 8.

Sumantra could not speak a word as he regretted and lamented a lot in his heart, saying to himself silently: ‘What would I see in Ayodhya now? (7)

Whoever sees the chariot return without Lord Ram would avoid seeing my shameful face¹. (8)

[Note—¹Sumantra brooded woefully: “I would be treated as an abominable pariah by one and all in Ayodhya. People would shun me; they would scorn at me. Say, how am I to run the administration of a kingdom with a population hostile to me? If someone asks me what happened, what answer would I give?”

The verses that follow herein below describe these thoughts going on in the mind of distraught Sumantra.]

दो०. धाइ पूँछिहहि मोहि जब बिकल नगर नर नारि ।
उतरु देब मैं सबहि तब हृदयँ बज्रु बैठारि ॥ १४५ ॥
dōhā.

dhā'i pūm̐chihahir̐m mōhi jaba bikala nagara nara nāri.
utaru dēba mair̐m sabahi taba hr̐dayam̐ bajru baiṭhāri. 145.

When the agitated and grieving citizens of Ayodhya, both males and females, rush out to enquire from me about what had happened (and where are Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman), woe to me, for then I will have to answer them with a heavy heart as if a great load was lying on it (that I have left them behind in the path to the forest)¹. (Doha no. 145)

[Note—¹Sumantra lamented that he would have to give a bad news to the citizens. At the time of replying he would feel as if his heart was bound in a clamp. He wouldn't be able to weep openly, or hurt the citizens further by refusing to answer either. Say, what would he do?]

चौ०. पुछिहहिं दीन दुखित सब माता । कहब काह मैं तिन्हहि बिधाता ॥ १ ॥

पूछिहि जबहिं लखन महतारी । कहिहउँ कवन सँदेस सुखारी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

puchihahir̐m dīna dukhita saba mātā. kahaba kāha mair̐m tinhahi bidhātā. 1.
pūchihi jabahir̐m lakhana mahatārī. kahiha'um̐ kavana sam̐dēsa sukhārī. 2.

Sumantra lamented: 'When the distraught and helpless mothers, who are sorely afflicted with sorrows of separation from Lord Ram, come to enquire from me, then oh gracious God, what answer shall I give them? (1)

When Laxman's mother (Sumitra) asks me for any message that her son has given for her, which message would I convey to her¹? (2)

[Note—¹As we have already read, Laxman was very bitter and sarcastic in his last comments made to Sumantra at the time when Lord Ram asked the chief minister to return to Ayodhya, but Lord Ram had barred Sumantra from divulging it to anybody for it would be extremely painful to hear, and would only add salt to the wound of grief of separation that is already so deep that it has caused immense suffering to everyone at home. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 96.}

Lord Ram's*1 and Sita's*2 comments and messages were soothing and courteous, showing no trace of bitterness and rancour, as opposed to Laxman's angry outburst. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, *1 = Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 95—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 96 (Lord Ram's response to Sumantra when he conveyed Dasrath's message to the Lord, asking him to return to Ayodhya); and *2 = Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 97—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 99 (Sita's response to Dasrath's request to return home).}]

राम जननि जब आइहि धाई । सुमिरि बच्छु जिमि धेनु लवाई ॥ ३ ॥

पूँछत उतरु देब मैं तेही । गे बनु राम लखनु बैदेही ॥ ४ ॥

जोड़ पूँछिहि तेहि ऊतरु देबा । जाइ अवध अब यह सुख लेबा ॥ ५ ॥

rāma janani jaba ā'ihī dhā'ī. sumiri bacchu jimi dhēnu lavā'ī. 3.
pūm'chata utaru dēba mairi tēhī. gē banu rāma lakhanu baidēhī. 4.
jō'i pūm'chihi tēhi ūtaru dēbā. jā'i avadha aba yahu sukhu lēbā. 5.

When Lord Ram's mother (Kaushalya) comes running to me just like a cow rushes forward when she remembers her calf and expects to be united with it as it is returning home (at the end of the day of grazing in the field), --- (3)

--- Alack-a-day and woe betide me, for I shall then have to stiffen myself and resolutely answer her, telling her that "Lord Ram, Sita (Vaidehi) and Laxman have gone to the forest"!

[Oh gracious God; why have thou selected my poor and unfortunate soul to be punished and tormented so severely as to force me to convey this most unacceptable of all the news in this world to everyone who would approach me to know what happened to Lord Ram, and why have I come back empty-handed from the forest, without bringing the Lord back with me?] (4)

[Drawing a deep breath and sighing miserably, Sumantra rued at his own fate that he has now to face the abominable task of conveying the news of his failure to bring back Lord Ram from the forest to every single person he meets in Ayodhya.]

Whosoever asks me (about Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman), I shall answer and tell them this (bad) news. Ah, this is the joy that is now left in my fate to be enjoyed when I go back to Ayodhya! (5)

पूँछिहि जबहिं राउ दुख दीना । जिवनु जासु रघुनाथ अधीना ॥ ६ ॥
देहउँ उतरु कौनु मुहु लाई । आयउँ कुसल कुअँर पहुँचाई ॥ ७ ॥
सुनत लखन सिय राम सँदेसू । तृन जिमि तनु परिहरिहि नरेसू ॥ ८ ॥

pūm'chihi jabahim rā'u dukha dīnā. jivanu jāsū raghunātha adhīnā. 6.
dēha'um' utaru kaunu muhu lā'ī. āya'um' kusala ku'amra pahum'cā'ī. 7.
sunata lakhana siya rāma sam'dēsū. tṛna jimi tanu pariharihi narēsū. 8.

When the king (Dasrath), who is already in a pitiable condition due to excess of grief and overwhelming sorrows, and whose life is dependent upon Lord Ram (raghunātha adhīnā)¹, --- (6)

--- With which shameful face would I answer his queries? Alas and grief upon my soul, for then I would tell him that I have safely taken the prince to his destination (in the forest, instead of bringing him back as ordered by the king, thereby defying the king)²! (7)

Forsooth (I can foretell that) no sooner the king (Dasrath) hears the news pertaining to Lord Ram, Laxman and Sita (that they have not returned, and instead have proceeded to the forest), but he would leave his mortal coil (body—i.e. die), discarding it as if it was a mere worthless twig that is of no more use to him³. (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 33; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 37; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 82; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 94.

²In these statements, the woeful and hopeless state of Sumantra's mind, and the pain and distress that afflicts his heart are evident. We have read earlier that out of frustration he was wringing his hands and beating his head (apropos: Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 144 herein above). He was utterly ashamed of himself and felt disgraceful that he failed to bring Lord Ram back to Ayodhya, and to add to his woes he now faces the ignominious task of having to tell everyone that he has left Lord Ram behind to proceed to the forest.

This thought traumatized him and left him muttering to himself like a hallucinating man, bringing sarcasm and contempt on his own self. It was the first time in his long career that Sumantra had failed in a mission assigned to him by the king, a cause that was enough to make him feel buried alive in shame.

³A profound metaphysical idea is involved here. The body is not the true identity of a living being, for it is the creature's 'soul', known as the 'Atma' that is his 'true identity'. This Atma is pure consciousness, and it lives in the physical body simply as one lives in a rented house. As long as the Atma lives in this body, it calls the body as its home, its identity by which the world knows the particular person. But when the Atma decides to leave, it discards the body and goes elsewhere just like a person leaves his rented accommodation to go where it pleases him. Once he leaves the rented house, he is not concerned what happens to it; it becomes worthless to him, whereas the same house was taken good care by him while he abided in it.

Similarly, once the Atma leaves the body, the latter becomes useless for the person; it is as worthless as a twig.

King Dasrath's true self was his Atma, and not his body. The Atma is pure consciousness, eternal, blissful and sublime. So, once it leaves the gross body, which is perishable nevertheless, the Atma finds eternal peace, because all the afflictions and pains and worries and sorrows are limited to the body, and they have no bearing upon the Atma and its eternal blissful state. Therefore, once Dasrath dies, his Atma would be freed from the sorrows that had overwhelmed him.]

दो०. हृदउ न बिदरेउ पंक जिमि बिछुरत प्रीतमु नीरु ।

जानत हौं मोहि दीन्ह बिधि यहु जातना सरीरु ॥ १४६ ॥

dōhā.

hr̥da'u na bidarē'u paṅka jimi bichurata prītamu nīru.
jānata haum̐ mōhi dīnha bidhi yahu jātanā sarīru. 146.

Alack-a-day! How woeful and unfortunate I am truly that the swampy ground representing my heart did not crack up even though its moisture representing affection for Lord Ram had evaporated at the time of my separation from him inasmuch as I did not immediately collapse and die at the instant of this separation.

Verily indeed, I know now why I did not die, for the Creator, who is antagonized with me, wanted to inflict the suffering of hell upon my body, and make me wallow in grief and sorrows by compelling me to live a pitiful life without Lord Ram. (Doha no. 146)

[Note—Sumantra laments and regrets that he did not die when it finally became clear that Lord Ram will not return home, and he (Sumantra) would be compelled to part with the Lord. He has just a while ago said that king Dasrath would shed his body and discard it as one throws away a twig as soon as he learns that Lord Ram has not returned, thereby upholding his vows of not surviving without the Lord, while he (i.e. Sumantra) would continue to live despite his professed love for the same Lord, which obviously puts his integrity in this respect in question.

In this verse, the heart is compared to a swampy ground as it is emotionally soft and supple like the latter. But when the moisture of the swamp evaporates due to heat or drought, its soil cracks up and hardens into cakes. Likewise, the heart of Sumantra also seems to be hard and caked, because it did not crack up and yield to the weight of grief of separation from Lord Ram, but survived to answer questions asked by distraught citizens and family members of Lord Ram.

In this context, refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 145 which resonates the same idea—that Sumantra would have to answer questions of the citizens of Ayodhya with a load on his heart, a heart that is stiffened, ruthless and emotionless.]

चौ०. एहि बिधि करत पंथ पछितावा । तमसा तीर तुरत रथु आवा ॥ १ ॥

बिदा किए करि बिनय निषादा । फिरे पायँ परि बिकल बिषादा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

ēhi bidhi karata pantha pachitāvā. tamasā tīra turata rathu āvā. 1.
bidā ki'ē kari binaya niṣādā. phirē pāyam̐ pari bikala biṣādā. 2.

In the aforesaid manner, while Sumantra kept on lamenting and regretting woefully all along the way, the chariot reached the banks of river Tamsa¹. (1)

Sumantra most politely requested his four escorts, the kinsmen of Guha Nishad who were asked by the latter to accompany the chief minister till the outskirts of Ayodhya, to return home from here. They were very sad as they fell at his (Sumantra's) feet to pay their obeisance to him, and then turned back to go their way². (2)

[Note—¹We will recall that this was the same place where Lord Ram had made his 1st halt for the night after leaving the city of Ayodhya on his way to the forest—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 84.

²Since Ayodhya was near from this point, Sumantra felt it wise to let the Nishad escorts return home. It is also quite possible that messengers, heralds, guards or spies, or even a small detachment of troops of Ayodhya were stationed here to keep watch over developments, and assist if needed, after Sumantra had left the place with Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman aboard the chariot. Remember: Ayodhya was a mighty

kingdom, and so there is no wonder that some sort of permanent guard outpost was present on the banks of the river Tamsa in order to keep a vigil on this boarder.

Hence, Sumantra felt quite at ease once he reached river Tamsa, and he thought that there was no more need of any further escort. So, he asked the four Nishad men to leave him there and return home.]

पैठत नगर सचिव सकुचाई । जनु मारेसि गुर बाँभन गाई ॥ ३ ॥
 बैठि बिटप तर दिवसु गवाँवा । साँझ समय तब अवसरु पावा ॥ ४ ॥
 अवध प्रबेसु कीन्ह अँधिआरें । पैठ भवन रथु राखि दुआरें ॥ ५ ॥

paiṭhata nagara saciva sakucā'ī. janu mārēsi gura bāmbhana gā'ī. 3.
 baiṭhi biṭapa tara divasu gavām'vā. sām'jha samaya taba avasaru pāvā. 4.
 avadha prabēsu kīnha aṁdhi'ārēn. paiṭha bhavana rathu rākhi du'ārēn. 5.

The chief minister was very shy and reluctant to go to the city of Ayodhya as if he was overburdened with the guilt of having killed his Guru (moral preceptor; teacher), a Brahmin or a cow. (3)

During the day, he waited under the shade of a tree (somewhere on the outskirts of the city), and when it was dusk and night was approaching, he found an opportunity to enter it. (4)

[So, contrite and forlorn, pale lips, gloomy thoughts swirling in his head, a heart heavy as lead, and the guilt of failure in his mission to bring back Lord Ram bearing down on his conscience—]

Sumantra quietly sneaked inside the city under the cover of darkness (in order not to be noticed by anyone)¹.

He parked the chariot at the gate of the palace and entered it silently (with a lowered head and a sunken heart). (5)

[Note—¹If a person has committed a heinous crime, such as murdering his teacher, or a Brahmin, or a cow, he would be sore affright to enter a city under full public glare. He would avoid entering it during the daytime, and would sneak in under the cover of darkness of the night, almost like a thief or a criminal who has been declared as absconding.

The same thing happened in the case of Sumantra. He waited under a tree somewhere on the outskirts of the city, and quietly sneaked in when night fell.]

जिन्ह जिन्ह समाचार सुनि पाए । भूप द्वार रथु देखन आए ॥ ६ ॥
 रथु पहिचानि बिकल लखि घोरे । गरहिं गात जिमि आतप ओरे ॥ ७ ॥
 नगर नारि नर ब्याकुल कैसें । निघटत नीर मीनगन जैसें ॥ ८ ॥

jinha jinha samācāra suni pā'ē. bhūpa dvāra rathu dēkhana ā'ē. 6.
 rathu pahicāni bikala lakhi ghōrē. garahim gāta jimi ātapa ōrē. 7.

nagara nāri nara byākula kaisēm. nighaṭata nīra mīnagana jaisēm. 8.

As soon as the news spread of his arrival, then whoever heard of it came to the gates of the royal palace to see the chariot to confirm the news of Sumantra's arrival. (6)

They recognized the chariot and found the horses in an utter miserable condition so much so that their bodies seemed to be exhausted (due to grief) and on the verge of collapse just like snowballs that are about to melt in the face of excessive heat. (7)

This sight spelled doom for the citizens of Ayodhya (for they could guess what it means). They became restless and agitated in the same way as shoals of fish become alarmed at the prospect of certain death when they find the water of their habitat (such as a pond) getting depleted¹. (8)

[Note—¹The sight of the distressed horses and the aura of gloom that surrounded the chariot as it stood lonely in the darkness of the night somewhere in the corner of the gate of the palace, was enough to send alarm bells ringing. The citizens could easily guess that they must girdle themselves to hear bad news, that it was certain Sumantra has returned empty-handed from his mission. It was too obvious to the citizens that Lord Ram has not come back, for had he returned, there would have been a rousing welcome by the guards at the gates of the city itself, creating such a tumult that the whole city would have known that the Lord has come back.

It would have been quite different from the situation at present, because now Sumantra had quietly entered the city, without much ado and almost unnoticed, except by some boarder guards who would have known about his return at the check posts where they must have checked his identity as he was entering the city by nightfall. Then he quietly parked the chariot and straightaway entered the royal palace.

No one stopped him at the gates because all guards knew him. It was some of these guards who had leaked the news of his arrival.]

दो०. सचिव आगमनु सुनत सबु बिकल भयउ रनिवासु ।
भवनु भयंकरु लाग तेहि मानहुँ प्रेत निवासु ॥ १४७ ॥

dōhā.

saciva āgamanu sunata sabu bikala bhaya'u ranivāsu.
bhavanu bhayaṅkaru lāga tēhi mānahuṁ prēta nivāsu. 147.

As the news that the chief minister has returned alone spread in the royal household, the entire palace was gripped in grief (because the very fact that Sumantra was 'alone' meant that Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman have not come back).

The royal palace appeared so horrifying as if it was a haunted place where ghosts lived. (Doha no.147)

चौ०. अति आरति सब पूँछहिं रानी । उतरु न आव बिकल भइ बानी ॥ १ ॥
सुनइ न श्रवन नयन नहिं सूझा । कहहु कहाँ नृपु तेहि तेहि बूझा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

ati ārati saba pūm̐chahiṁ rānī. utaru na āva bikala bha'i bānī. 1.
suna'i na śravana nayana nahim̐ sūjhā. kahahu kahām̐ nṛpu tēhi tēhi būjhā. 2.

The queens came rushing out to enquire anxiously from Sumantra what news he had brought, but he was so agitated himself that he could not speak a word in reply. (1)

He was so distraught and nervous that he could neither hear nor see anything. Deflecting the queries of the queens, he asked the palace attendants whom he met about the whereabouts of the king (Dasrath). (2)

दासिन्ह दीख सचिव बिकलाई । कौसल्या गृहँ गई लवाई ॥ ३ ॥
जाइ सुमंत्र दीख कस राजा । अमिअ रहित जनु चंदु बिराजा ॥ ४ ॥

dāsinha dīkha saciva bikalāī. kausalyā gṛham̐ ga'īm̐ lavāī. 3.
jā'i sumantra dīkha kasa rājā. ami'a rahita janu candu birājā. 4.

When the female attendants of the palace (dāsinha) observed the precarious condition of the chief minister (Sumantra) and saw his agitated state of mind, they escorted him to the palace of Kaushalya (the senior-most of the queens and mother of Lord Ram)¹. (3)

When Sumantra went and saw the king he found the latter so gloomy and pale as if the moon has lost all of its shine and drained of its nectar which would render its silvery disc dark and lusterless². (4)

[Note—¹When Sumantra last met Dasrath, it was in the 'Kopa Bhavan', a special part of the palace that was designated as a place where any member of the royal household, especially the queens, would go to express their resentment on any subject. When any aggrieved member of the royal household went there, the place's guards would send a message to the king in this regard.

It was here that Kaikeyi had gone to vent her ire on her husband, and demand that he appoint her son Bharat as the next king, and at the same time send Lord Ram to the forest in order to prevent the latter from creating an obstacle in Bharat's ascension to the throne. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 23; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 29.}

It was in this place, known as Kopa Bhavan, that Dasrath had summoned Sumantra and asked him to take a chariot and go behind Lord Ram after the Lord took leave of his father and headed out of the city on his way to the forest. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 81 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it.}

According to Valmiki's Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, Canto 42, verse nos. 27-28, Dasrath had asked his attendants to take him to the palace of queen Kaushalya where he would find some peace and comfort.

²Traditionally in ancient literature the moon is regarded as a reservoir of Amrit, the soothing and cool nectar of bliss that is stored in the moon by the gods of heaven. That is why out of the two prominent heavenly bodies in the sky, the sun and the moon, it is the latter which is cool and soothing as compared to the sun that scorches.

When the ‘nectar’ of the moon drains off, its disc becomes dark, because it has no light of its own unlike the sun which shines on its own accord. When the moon is filled with nectar, the sunlight that falls on it makes it shine in the same way as a glass full of milk would look white when a light is shone on it, but when the milk is poured out the same glass would look dark.

This metaphor is used to stress that Dasrath was overcome with gloom and sorrows so much that all his natural vigour and the radiance of his face had faded away, and he lay listless on his bed, brooding and lamenting gravely like a man in the throes of death. It was in this pitiful condition that Sumantra found Dasrath.]

आसन सयन बिभूषन हीना । परेउ भूमितल निपट मलीना ॥ ५ ॥

लेइ उसासु सोच एहि भाँती । सुरपुर तें जनु खँसेउ जजाती ॥ ६ ॥

āsana sayana bibhūṣana hīnā. parē'u bhūmitala nipaṭa malīnā. 5.
lē'i usāsu sōca ēhi bhāmṭī. surapura tēm janu khamśē'u jajātī. 6.

Dasrath was lying distraught and remorseful on the bare ground, without any kind of mat or a bed under him, and also with no royal ornaments that he usually wore on his body. (5)

He was breathing deeply and lost in gloomy thoughts in the same way that king Yayaati (jajāti) had regretted at the time when he was ejected from the heaven and condemned to fall back on earth¹. (6)

[Note—¹The story of Yayaati is narrated in Mahabharat, Adi Parva, Cantos. 70-76. In brief it is as follows:

Yayaati was the second of the six sons of king Nahush, who was the 10th descendent of the ancient king Daksha. Yayaati was so competent that he inherited the kingdom of his father. He was very valiant, righteous, and a great devotee of Lord God. It so happened that one day Yayaati approached a well as he was very thirsty. There he found a heavenly damsel known as ‘Devayaani’ inside the well, as she had been dumped there by Sharmistha, a daughter of a Daitya (a class of demons) Vrishparva.

The king rescued Devayaani by pulling her out of the well by holding her right hand, and then he took her to his kingdom to marry her.

Meanwhile, sage Shukracharya, the Guru of the Daityas, was very angry at this mischief of daughter of one of his disciples, so he decided to abandon them. Taken aback and fearing a curse from the sage as well as a backlash from her father, Sharmistha agreed to serve Devayaani as her maid, along with a thousand of her own attendants.

Yayaati begot two sons from Devayaani, and as was the wont of kings of ancient times, he also wedded Sharmistha privately and produced three sons from her.

When the infidelity of her husband became known to Devayaani, she went and complained to sage Shukracharya, who was so annoyed with the king that he cursed him to become old and lose his libido.

The king asked for forgiveness and prayed that his curse be somehow mitigated. So the sage gave him a respite, telling him that he can exchange his old age with someone who is willing to give him his own young age and accept the king's old

age. Yayaati asked all his five sons, Yadu, Turvasu, Druhmhu, Anu and Puru, to lend him their young age, but out of the five only the youngest son, Puru, accepted to lend his young age to his father for one thousand years. The king cursed his four elder sons who had declined, but blessed Puru and told him that at the end of this period he would get back his age and vigour as well as would inherit the kingdom.

At the end of the thousand years, Yayaati developed dispassion and renounced all worldly affairs. He made Puru his heir to the throne, as promised. The Brahmins (elders of the society) approached Yayaati on behalf of the older sons and said that he should have transferred power to his eldest son (Yadu), to which Yayaati replied that a disobedient son has no right or claim over the property of his father, for a son who is obedient and loyal to his parents is one who is deemed to be a true son. This view was endorsed by sage Shukracharya too, and backed by the subjects of the kingdom.

Yayaati did severe Tapa (penance, austerity) for another one thousand years, and as a reward of it he went to the heaven. In the heaven, the king of gods, Indra, interviewed Yayaati and asked him how hard or severe Tapa had he done. Instead of showing humility and shying away from boast, Yayaati replied proudly and haughtily that his Tapa was so great that it surpassed that done by anyone else, including the gods or the humans such as great sages and ascetics etc.

As a result of this haughtiness, boastfulness and show of pride, characters that are deemed to be negative and unbecoming of someone aspiring for an abode in the heaven, he was expelled and made to fall from heaven. When the gods saw him repenting in a pitiable condition, they were moved and had sympathy for him. So, while he was tumbling down from heaven, the gods pushed him to the ground where king Ashtak performed a fire sacrifice.

King Ashtak was astonished at seeing someone falling from the heaven and landing on his ground, so he enquired about the reason. Yayaati told him that there are 'seven doors to heaven', viz. Tapa (penance), Daan (charity), Shanti (peace), Dama (self control of the sense organs), Loka-Lajja (behaving in a proper way; upholding decorum and norms of good behaviour in society; not doing anything that breaks tradition and invites ridicule), Saralta (simplicity, humility), and Daya (mercy, compassion, kindness).

But if someone becomes proud of his above achievements and goes about boasting of them, then all his merit becomes null and void, and the doors of heaven close for him. Yayaati regretted sorely that he lost heaven because he was trapped by Indra, the cunning king of gods, to praise himself and feel proud of his meritorious deeds, something which is a negative trait of character, and debars a person from his claim to heaven.

King Ashtak took pity on Yayaati, and he used the power of his own meritorious life to send Yayaati back to the forest, thereby preventing him from landing permanently on earth and entering the cycle of birth and death once again.]

लेत सोच भरि छिनु छिनु छाती । जनु जरि पंख परेउ संपाती ॥ ७ ॥

राम राम कह राम सनेही । पुनि कह राम लखन बैदेही ॥ ८ ॥

lēta sōca bhari chinu chinu chātī. janu jari paṅkha parē'u sampātī. 7.
rāma rāma kaha rāma sanēhī. puni kaha rāma lakhana baidēhī. 8.

Every other moment the king (Dasrath) would sigh and heave his chest in regret as if Sampati laments after his wings were burnt by the sun's heat and he fell to the ground¹. (7)

As he lay on the ground, he was most woefully repeating the name of Lord Ram who was very dear to him, as well as the name of Sita and Laxman. (8)

[Note—¹Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precedes Doha no. 28 where Sampati has narrated the story why his wings were burnt by the sun. He was the elder brother of Jatau, the vulture who was killed while trying to save Sita from being taken away by Ravana.

When his wings were burnt as he went too close to the sun in his haughtiness, Sampati fell on earth, grieving and lamenting at his stubbornness. Here, Dasrath laments that he was so confident of himself that he would always have his way and no one can subdue him, that he allowed Kaikeyi to have an unchecked sway over him, allowing her to become domineering and gain undue leverage upon him, in the belief that she won't be able to subdue him or misuse her proximity with him. But alas, after being bitten by a pet snake, there is no point in regretting the decision of keeping a snake as a pet.

Hence, Dasrath regretted that all that has happened was due to his own miscalculations, and things have reached a point from where there is no return. He is full of remorse and contrition that he alone is to be blamed for the catastrophe that has befallen upon the whole of Ayodhya.]

दो०. देखि सचिवँ जय जीव कहि कीन्हैउ दंड प्रनामु।
सुनत उठैउ व्याकुल नृपति कहु सुमंत्र कहँ रामु ॥ १४८ ॥

dōhā.

dēkhi sacivam̐ jaya jīva kahi kīnhē'u daṇḍa pranāmu.
sunata uṭhē'u byākula nṛpati kahu sumantra kham̐ rāmu. 148.

When the chief minister (Sumantra) saw the king (Dasrath) in this pitiful condition, he was aghast. He formally greeted the king and prostrated before him to pay his respects.

No sooner the king heard his voice (as the chief minister wished him), but he got up with a start, very agitated and almost on edge, asking him anxiously, 'Say Sumantra, where is Ram? [Tell me, have thou brought him back?]' (Doha no. 148)

चौ०. भूप सुमंत्रु लीन्ह उर लाई । बूड़त कछु अधार जनु पाई ॥ १ ॥
सहित सनेह निकट बैठारी । पूँछत राउ नयन भरि बारी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

bhūpa sumantru līnha ura lāī. būṛata kachu adhāra janu pāī. 1.
sahita sanēha nikaṭa baiṭhārī. pūm̐chata rā'u nayana bhari bārī. 2.

The king (Dasrath) clasped Sumantra to his bosom with some solace in the same way as a sinking man finds some hope for survival when he sees a buoy. (1)

With great affection the king made Sumantra sit near him, and then, with eyes filled with tears, he asked the chief minister about the news (of Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman). (2)

राम कुसल कहु सखा सनेही । कहँ रघुनाथु लखनु बैदेही ॥ ३ ॥
आने फेरि कि बनहि सिधाए । सुनत सचिव लोचन जल छाए ॥ ४ ॥

rāma kusala kahu sakhā sanēhī. kaham̐ raghunāthu lakhanu baidēhī. 3.
ānē phēri ki banahi sidhā'ē. sunata saciva lōcana jala chā'ē. 4.

The king said: 'My dear friend, apprise me about the welfare of Lord Ram. Where are Ragunath (i.e. Lord Ram, the Lord of the race of kings belonging to family of Raghu—"raghunāthu"), Laxman and Sita ("baidēhī", the daughter of king of Videha, i.e. king Janak). (3)

Have thou brought them back, or have they proceeded to the forest?'

Hearing this query of the king, tears welled up in the eyes of the chief minister¹. (4)

[Note—¹Sumantra became tongue-tied; he did not know what to say or how to answer this question. His eyes became moist, his lips were shut tight, he shivered, took a deep breath and he lowered his head. His body language was enough to speak for him, and Dasrath immediately understood what Sumantra meant to say but did not muster courage to speak about it.

To wit, the king realized that the answer to his query was in the negative, that Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman have not returned, and instead they have gone ahead to the forest. This will be clear in the next set of verses that follow.]

सोक बिकल पुनि पूँछ नरेसू । कहु सिय राम लखन संदेसू ॥ ५ ॥
राम रूप गुन सील सुभाऊ । सुमिरि सुमिरि उर सोचत राऊ ॥ ६ ॥

sōka bikala puni pūm̐cha narēsū. kahu siya rāma lakhana sandēsū. 5.
rāma rūpa guna sīla subhā'ū. sumiri sumiri ura sōcata rā'ū. 6.

The king was extremely agitated and overcome with grief as he enquired from Sumantra: 'Tell me the message that Sita, Ram and Laxman have sent for me.' (5)

The king was lost in the thoughts of Lord Ram and recalled the Lord's many stellar qualities, of his charm, his excellent virtues and character, his good and courteous nature, his amiable disposition towards one and all—i.e. the recollection of all the good things about Lord Ram¹ came storming over his mind and struck his heart like a thunder stroke, making him excessively contrite, pensive, remorseful, despondent and distraught. (6)

[Note—¹In this context, refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 1; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 3.]

राउ सुनाइ दीन्ह बनबासू । सुनि मन भयउ न हरषु हराँसू ॥ ७ ॥
सो सुत बिछुरत गए न प्राना । को पापी बड़ मोहि समाना ॥ ८ ॥

rā'u sunā'i dīnha banabāsū. suni mana bhaya'u na haraṣu harāṁsū. 7.
sō suta bichurata ga'e na prānā. kō pāpī baṛa mōhi samānā. 8.

King Dasrath rued as he sorely lamented at his misfortune: 'Alas, it was announced by me that he (Lord Ram) would be made a king, and then I myself had to send him to the forest. But inspite of this shock and betrayal by none but his own father, he (Lord Ram) showed no signs of either remorse, rancour or anger (at being so unceremoniously disinherited from his right and banished to the forest for no fault of his), or joy (at being freed from the burden of bearing the weight of a kingdom, and instead being allowed to go and roam freely wherever he wishes in the world, with no worry of any kind on his head). (7)

Alack-a-day, woe to me and my accursed soul! Such a dear and obedient son was separated from me and he went away, but my 'Pran' (life) did not leave me, it was not separated from me, and I am still alive!

Say truly, who is a greater or a bigger sinner than me?

[Who is more unfortunate, cursed and contemptible than me? Who is worthy of more scorn, ridicule, rebuke and condemnation than my accursed self? Well, all is my own doing, for the wrath of my accumulated sins has suddenly burst out upon me like an erupting volcano spewing hot lava that scorches everything nearby.]' (8)

दो०. सखा रामु सिय लखनु जहँ तहाँ मोहि पहुँचाउ ।
नाहिं त चाहत चलन अब प्रान कहउँ सतिभाउ ॥ १४९ ॥

dōhā.

sakhā rāmu siya lakhanu jaham'tahām'mōhi pahumčā'u.
nāhirn ta cāhata calana aba prāna kaha'um'satibhā'u. 149.

Dasrath continued: 'My dear friend (Sumantra), take me to that place where Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman are at present.

If this is not done, then I speak truly and honestly that my Pran (life-forces inside the body) wishes to leave and depart (i.e. I won't survive; I will certainly die)¹. (Doha no. 149)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Geetawali Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, verse no. 47 where similar emotions are narrated.

There are two ways in which this sorrowful statement of Dasrath can be interpreted.

The first is that he says: “Sumantra, either take me physically to that place where Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman are, or else I will discard this gross body and go there myself in a subtle form known as the Atma, which however is my ‘true self’. I may not be able to reach them in physical terms if no one helps me go there, but no one can stop me from going there in a subtle form represented by my soul.”

The second interpretation is more obvious: “Sumantra, if you want me to survive, then take me to where I can meet Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman. Otherwise, I will die.”]

चौ०. पुनि पुनि पूँछत मंत्रिहि राऊ । प्रियतम सुअन सँदेस सुनाऊ ॥ १ ॥

करहि सखा सोइ बेगि उपाऊ । रामु लखनु सिय नयन देखाऊ ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

puni puni pūm̐chata mantrihi rā'ū. priyatama su'ana sam̐dēsa sunā'ū. 1.

karahi sakhā sō'i bēgi upā'ū. rāmu lakhanu siya nayana dēkhā'ū. 2.

[As Sumantra was chocking with grief himself and was so emotionally upset that he could not speak a word by way of reply to king Dasrath's requests to tell him something about Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman, the king repeated his query and asked Sumantra to tell him if his dear sons and daughter-in-law had sent some message for him.]

The distraught king repeatedly asked his chief minister: ‘Please let me hear the message my dear ones have sent for me. (1)

My dear friend, make some urgent arrangements and quickly devise a way by means of which I can see with my eyes Lord Ram, Laxman and Sita. [To wit, please don't delay or try to deflect the matter any more, for I can't wait indefinitely.]’ (2)

सचिव धीर धरि कह मृदु बानी । महाराज तुम्ह पंडित ग्यानी ॥ ३ ॥

बीर सुधीर धुरंधर देवा । साधु समाजु सदा तुम्ह सेवा ॥ ४ ॥

saciva dhīra dhari kaha mṛdu bānī. mahārāja tumha paṇḍita gyānī. 3.

bīra sudhīra dhurandhara dēvā. sādhu samāju sadā tumha sēvā. 4.

[Sumantra observed that the king was on an edge, and if he does not intervene wisely and act swiftly than the situation would slip out of hand, and some calamitous development would take place. So therefore, Sumantra spoke for the first time, trying to console and pacify Dasrath by comforting him, and encouraging him to have patience and show forbearance in the face of this adverse time.]

The chief minister gathered together his wits and courage, and spoke to Dasrath with a patient and comforting tone: ‘Oh Your Majesty (mahārāja)! Thou art wise, learned, intelligent, prudent, and well-versed in all matters. (3)

Thou art brave, bold, courageous and resilient, and thou art an expert in all manners of things.

Thou havest always served Gods and the community of saints and pious people most diligently. (4)

जनम मरन सब दुख सुख भोगा । हानि लाभ प्रिय मिलन बियोगा ॥ ५ ॥
काल करम बस होहिं गोसाईं । बरबस राति दिवस की नाई ॥ ६ ॥

janama marana saba dukha sukha bhōgā. hāni lābhu priya milana biyōgā. 5.
kāla karama basa hōhir̥m gōsā'ir̥m. barabasa rāti divasa kī nā'ir̥m. 6.

This being the case, thou art fully aware all existential circumstances in this mortal world, such as birth and death, all sorts of joys and happiness that a person enjoys in his life on one the hand, and the sorrows and grief from which he suffers on the other hand, nay, all types of losses and gains, including union with someone who is one's beloved, or separation from the same beloved one, --- (5)

--- Oh my respected lord (gōsā'ir̥m), all these circumstances are under the control of Kaal and Karma (i.e. they are determined respectively by one's fate, destiny and providence on the one hand, and the consequences of one's deeds on the other hand) in the same way that night and day compulsorily follow each other in a routine and systematic manner, without fail and delay of even a fraction¹. (6)

[Note—¹Sumantra exhorted Dasrath to have patience and show wisdom in the face of adversity. The king ought not to act like a child and fall prey to emotional outbursts, because he has nothing to gain by it, but everything to lose.

Citing the example of the cycle of night and day following each other in a set routine, in a set pattern, without anybody being able to disturb this rhythm, Sumantra tells Dasrath that in a similar way, all misfortunes would one day give space to good fortunes, and vice versa.

No one can claim that he has done absolutely no wrong in this mortal world, because though one may not have willingly or consciously done wrong, but there may have been situations when some mistake was committed by him inadvertently, the consequences of which cannot be brushed aside on the plea that a person has not done it willingly.

This phenomenon can be easily understood by a simple example. Suppose one willingly drinks poison in an attempt to commit suicide, but somehow survives with some serious health problems, such a paralysis or other issues, that make him suffer for the rest of his life —then he blames himself for the horrors of his reckless actions.

But suppose he unknowingly drinks some liquid, say plain water, which contains the same poison as mentioned above. Will the consequences on his body in this second case be any different from the case when he willingly drunk the same poison to commit suicide? No, the body will be subjected to the same horrifying consequences in both the cases.

Similarly, a person often blames fate, god and destiny for the sufferings he has to experience in life, complaining that he has not done anything so bad as to be punished in this serious way. But he does not realize that he may have done

something wrong unwittingly, inadvertently, unknowingly in the past that has produced a circumstance at present at which he is astonished and does not like.

Another interpretation of this example of ‘night and day following each other’ is that all sufferings would one day end when the cause of these sufferings gradually dissipate, leading the way to good times in the same way as the darkness of the night would yield to the light of the day.

Hence, Sumantra advises king Dasrath that if he shows patience, resilience, courage and forbearance, then a day will come when he would be able to meet Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman once again, but if he grieves and laments in the woeful way he is doing at present he would surely die, and with death he would lose that golden opportunity to see his beloved sons and daughter-in-law once again at the end of fourteen years when they will surely return.]

सुख हरषहिं जड़ दुख बिलखाहीं । दोउ सम धीर धरहिं मन माहीं ॥ ७ ॥
धीरज धरहु बिबेकु बिचारी । छाड़िअ सोच सकल हितकारी ॥ ८ ॥

sukha haraṣahim̐ jaṛa dukha bilakhāhīm̐. dō'u sama dhīra dharahim̐ mana māhīm̐. 7.

dhīraja dharahu bibēku bicārī. chāḍia sōca sakala hitakārī. 8.

Those who are fool and ignorant would feel joyous and exhilarated during happy times or circumstances, or lament, grieve and feel sad and despondent during unhappy times or circumstances.

On the other hand, those who are wise, enlightened and learned, would treat both the opposite circumstances or times equally, showing equanimity and self-control, and bearing with or treating whatever comes their way with fortitude and neutrality. (7)

Hence, oh my revered lord, show patience and have courage by being wise and prudent during the present testing time of adversity.

Therefore, show maturity of thought by abandoning all negative emotions as it will be beneficial for everyone¹.’ (8)

[Note—¹Sumantra told Dasrath: “My Honourable Lord! If thou lovest thine mental bearing and courage, remember that the whole kingdom would suffer. Thou wilt be committing a greater error and a graver sin if thy subjects are made to suffer due to thine personal issues that have afflicted thee so much. Let these personal family issues not come in the way of the bigger responsibilities that thy have towards thine loyal subjects. Remember: It is thy moral responsibility to care for the welfare of thine subjects more than anything else. Thou art famed for having exemplary courage and wisdom in the face of adversity, and on countless previous occasions thy havest even proved thine mettle during worse situations when someone in thy place wouldst have buckled and fall down. Remember also the old adage that ‘there is a silver lining to a dark cloud’, for misfortunes don’t last for ever. The chill of every winter would lead to the warmth of summer for those who are patient enough to wait for the winter’s end so that they can welcome the sunlight of the summer to cheer them up. Thou shouldst gracefully accept what comes thy way, instead of fretting and fuming as it wouldst serve no purpose.

So, oh wise king, please have patience and show resilience. Grieving and losing hope would serve thee no purpose. It would be disastrous for everyone.”]

दो०. प्रथम बासु तमसा भयउ दूसर सुरसरि तीर ।
 न्हाइ रहे जलपानु करि सिय समेत दोउ बीर ॥ १५० ॥

dōhā.

prathama bāsu tamasā bhaya'u dūsara surasari tīra.
 nhā'i rahē jalapānu kari siya samēta dō'u bīra. 150.

[After having first exhorted king Dasrath to show wisdom and to have patience during these testing times, instead of buckling underneath under the weight of misfortunes by becoming meek and pliant to the will of bad Times, Sumantra would now narrate the sequence of events after Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman had left Ayodhya and boarded the chariot taken by him on the instructions of the king.]

Sumantra told Dasrath: ‘The first day’s halt was on the banks of river Tamsa¹, and the second day’s was on the banks of river Ganges² where the two warriors (i.e. Lord Ram and Laxman), along with Sita, had taken a bath, and then had some refreshments (such as fruits, edible roots and stems) to eat and water to drink³. (Doha no. 150)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 84.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 87.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 87; (ii) Doha no. 89 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it.]

चौ०. केवट कीन्हि बहुत सेवकाई । सो जामिनि सिंगरौर गवाँई ॥ १ ॥
 होत प्रात बट छीरु मगावा । जटा मुकुट निज सीस बनावा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kēvaṭa kīnhi bahuta sēvakāī. sō jāmini singaraura gavāī. 1.
 hōta prāta baṭa chīru magāvā. jaṭa mukuṭa nija sīsa banāvā. 2.

The Kewat (here meaning Guha Nishad as he was the chief of the boatman community) served them (i.e. Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman) affectionately, warmly and in a variety of ways¹.

That night (i.e. the second night) was spent in Srigberpur². (1)

In the morning of the next day, Lord Ram called for sap of the banyan tree, which he rubbed on his long hairs to make them sticky, twined them into a thick pleat, and then wound it on his head to form a crown over his head (in the same way as ascetics do)³.
 (2)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 88; (ii) Doha no. 89 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede it.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 87; (ii) Doha no. 89.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 94.]

राम सखाँ तब नाव मगाई । प्रिया चढ़ाइ चढ़े रघुराई ॥ ३ ॥
लखन बान धनु धरे बनाई । आपु चढ़े प्रभु आयसु पाई ॥ ४ ॥

rāma sakhāṁ taba nāva magā'ī. priyā caṛhā'i caṛhē raghurā'ī. 3.
lakhana bāna dhanu dharē banā'ī. āpu caṛhē prabhu āyasu pā'ī. 4.

Lord Ram's friend (Guha Nishad) then called for a boat¹ on which Lord Ram (the Lord of Raghus; "raghurā'ī") boarded along with Sita. (3)

Laxman carefully placed all the arms, such as the bows and arrows, on the boat and arranged them in an orderly way. Then on the Lord's instructions he stepped inside the boat himself². (4)

[Note—¹Earlier in our reading of Ram Charit Manas we have read that it was Lord Ram himself, and not Guha Nishad, who had summoned some boatman and asked the latter to take him across river Ganges—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 100.

This boatman was a different person, and not Guha Nishad. This will be clear when we further read that after crossing the river, Lord Ram asked the boatman to take something in return as his fare for the boat, which the boatman refused, and after prostrating before the Lord and seeking nothing but the Lord's blessings he returned home—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 101—to Doha no. 102.

After saying good-bye to the boatman, Lord Ram proceeded to the forest, and we read that Guha Nishad accompanied the Lord in his onwards journey—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-7 that precede Doha no. 104.

However, what we read here presently, that it was Guha Nishad who had called for the boat, is in accordance with the narration given in sage Veda Vyas' "Adhyatma Ramayan", Ayodhya Kand, Canto 6, verse nos. 17-21. Here we read that the boat was rowed by Guha Nishad himself.

To wit, Tulsidas, the saint-poet who penned Ram Charit Manas, had drawn from other established sources, such as Adhyatma Ramayan in this case, to knit together different variations of the glorious story of Lord Ram so as to form a composite narrative that straddles different versions of the story and brings under one roof its many dimensions, thereby presenting to the reader a colourful version of his own that has elements from all such diverse sources.

²The sequence in which Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman boarded the boat, and Laxman putting all their arms, such as the bows and the arrows, inside the boat before stepping in himself, is also in accordance with the narration given in the verses of the Adhyatma Ramayan cited herein above.]

बिकल बिलोकि मोहि रघुबीरा । बोले मधुर बचन धरि धीरा ॥ ५ ॥
 तात प्रनामु तात सन कहेहू । बार बार पद पंकज गहेहू ॥ ६ ॥
 करबि पायँ परि बिनय बहोरी । तात करिअ जनि चिंता मोरी ॥ ७ ॥
 बन मग मंगल कुसल हमारें । कृपा अनुग्रह पुन्य तुम्हारें ॥ ८ ॥

bikala bilōki mōhi raghubīrā. bōlē madhura bacana dhari dhīrā. 5.
 tāta pranāmu tāta sana kahēhū. bāra bāra pada paṅkaja gahēhū. 6.
 karabi pāyam̐ pari binaya bahōrī. tāta kari'a jani cintā mōrī. 7.
 bana maga maṅgala kusala hamārēm. kṛpā anugraha pun'ya tumhārēm. 8.

When Lord Ram (the brave Lord of the king Raghu's race; "raghubīrā") found that I was profoundly confounded and sorrowful¹, he consoled me and spoke to me using sweet and comforting words². (5)

He told me: 'My dear chief minister (tāta), please convey my regards and obeisance to my dear father (pranāmu tāta sana kahēhū)³ by repeatedly clasping his lotus-like feet (bāra bāra pada paṅkaja gahēhū) on my behalf. (6)

After a pause, fall at his feet once again and pray on my behalf, to tell him my message—"My dear father (tāta), please do not worry at all for me (kari'a jani cintā mōrī)⁴. (7)

By your grace, blessings, and the results of your meritorious life and auspicious deeds, everything will be alright and auspicious for me too in the forest as well as on the path. [Your rewards of your auspicious deeds and meritorious life would act as a shield and an umbrella to give protection of every kind to me, my wife Sita, and my brother Laxman. Hence, there is no reason why thou shalt be worried for us.] (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 94 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede it.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precede Doha no. 95.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 95.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 95.]

छं०. तुम्हें अनुग्रह तात कानन जात सब सुखु पाइहौं । १ ।
 प्रतिपालि आयसु कुसल देखन पाय पुनि फिरि आइहौं ॥ २ ॥

जननीं सकल परितोषि परि परि पायँ करि बिनती घनी । ३ ।
तुलसी करेहु सोइ जतनु जेहिं कुसली रहहिं कोसल धनी ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

tumharēm anugraha tāta kānana jāta saba sukhu pā'ihaurṁ. 1.
pratipāli āyasu kusala dēkhana pāya puni phiri ā'ihaurṁ. 2.
jananiṁ sakala paritōṣi pari pari pāyam'kari binatī ghanī. 3.
tulasī karēhu sō'i jatānu jēhiṁ kusalī rahahiṁ kōsala dhanī. 4.

Sumantra told king Dasrath that Lord Ram continued to comfort him calmly, assuaging his feeling of profound sorrow by telling him to convey the following message to his father: 'Oh my dear father (tāta)! I shall find all comfort and happiness by going to the forest as it is your wish and I have your blessings to support and protect me in this regard¹. (Chanda line no. 1)

I shall successfully carry out your instructions and return home to see your august feet once again (at the end of the designated period of fourteen years).' (Chanda line no. 2)

Sumantra added: The Lord also asked me to comfort all the mothers in an appropriate way, fall before their feet to pay his respects to them, and pray to them. (Chanda line no. 3)

Tulsidas says that Sumantra told Dasrath that Lord Ram asked him to request his mothers to take proper care of the king of Kaushal (i.e. king Dasrath) in all possible ways². (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹Lord Ram meant that since he has gone to the forest to obey his father and comply with his wishes, he is very sure that no harm can come to him, because a son who obeys his parents is blessed by good fortunes, and the gods too are always favourably disposed towards him. In this context, refer to Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 55.

The cause of worry for him would have been if he had gone to the forest due to some other cause, such as for instance after some arguments with his parents and insulting them, or some other kind of misdemeanour and sinful act, whether it was small or big, which required him to be punished by banishment to the forest. But in the present case, he is merely obeying his father's words given to his step-mother like an honourable son is expected to do, and he has come to the forest willingly and cheerfully, without any ill-will and rancour in his heart or mind. So, there is no problem whatsoever.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 96.]

सो०. गुर सन कहब सँदेसु बार बार पद पदुम गहि ।
करब सोइ उपदेसु जेहिं न सोच मोहि अवधपति ॥ १५१ ॥

sōraṭhā.

gura sana kahaba samḍēsu bāra bāra pada paduma gahi.
karaba sō'i upadēsu jēhim na sōca mōhi avadhapati. 151.

Sumantra told Dasrath: 'Lord Ram asked me to clasp the lotus-like feet of his Guru (sage Vasistha) and convey his message to latter that he (the Guru) should give such advice to the king of Ayodhya (i.e. king Dasrath, Lord's father) that latter does not worry for him (Lord Ram).¹' (Sortha no. 151)

[Note—¹At the time of his departure from Ayodhya, Lord Ram had gone to pay his respects to sage Vasistha. At that time a huge crowd had followed the Lord to the sage's place. Lord Ram had also summoned senior members of the society at that time, and addressing everyone on that occasion he had requested them all that they would do a service to him by ensuring that king Dasrath as well as all the mothers remain happy and do not lament for him. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 80 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it.]

चौ०. पुरजन परिजन सकल निहोरी । तात सुनाएहु बिनती मोरी ॥ १ ॥
सोइ सब भाँति मोर हितकारी । जातें रह नरनाहु सुखारी ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

purajana parijana sakala nihōrī. tāta sunā'ēhu binatī mōrī. 1.
sō'i saba bhāmṭi mōra hitakārī. jātēm raha naranāhu sukhārī. 2.

Sumantra told Dasrath what Lord Ram had said: 'My dear (tāta)', said Lord Ram, 'please call all the citizens as well as my kith and kin, such as members of our family, our servants, our dependents et al (purajana parijana), and convey to them my humble submission that --- (1)

--- In whatever way the king (Dasrath; "naranāhu") is kept happy, in whatever manner he finds comfort and solace, all such ways and means should be deemed to make me happy too.

[And therefore, everyone should try to do everything possible which would make my father, king Dasrath, happy and comforted, so that he does not suffer in grief for me and never laments my absence, for it will make me happy if my respected father is kept happy.]¹ (2)

[Note—¹While departing from Ayodhya, Lord Ram had made the same request to all the distraught citizens who had gathered around him when he had gone to sage Vasistha's home to take his blessings before leaving for the forest: refer—Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 80.]

कहब सँदेसु भरत के आएँ । नीति न तजिअ राजपदु पाएँ ॥ ३ ॥
पालेहु प्रजहि करम मन बानी । सेएहु मातु सकल सम जानी ॥ ४ ॥

kahaba samḍēsu bharata kē ā'ēm̐. nīti na taji'a rājapadu pā'ēm̐. 3.
pālēhu prajahi karama mana bānī. sē'ēhu mātu sakala sama jānī. 4.

When Bharat comes home, please convey my message to him that he should not abandon the path of right conduct and thought, that he should always abide by and uphold the principles of rule of law and morality while carrying out his responsibilities after ascending the throne of the kingdom of Ayodhya.

[To wit, tell Bharat on my behalf not to become haughty and arrogant after he assumes the crown of the kingdom. He ought to remain humble and law-abiding, be conscientious in all his actions and deeds, maintain decorum of his stature, be vigilant in matters of morality and ethics, never do and say anything that would bring taint on the glorious name of our family, and please tell him to let me feel proud of him whenever I get any tidings of his behaviour as the king of the great kingdom over which he is destined to rule.] (3)

He should take care of the subjects of the kingdom and serve them well with great diligence, employing his actions, thoughts and words for their welfare and well-being.

[To wit, he ought to always keep the interest and welfare of the citizens at the top of the agenda, and act, think and speak accordingly.]

He should serve all the mothers equally, treating them all alike and showing them all equal respect.

[To wit, he should not treat his step-mothers, such as my mother Kaushalya, and Laxman's mother Sumitra, differently than his own mother Kaikeyi. He should respect them all. He also should not punish his mother Kaikeyi for being the cause of my coming to the forest, for it is none of her fault, as whatever happens is determined by many interacting factors working together in a complex mechanism, and therefore one should not single out any one factor or individual to be blamed for any misfortune that befalls upon him.] (4)

ओर निबाहेहु भायप भाई । करि पितु मातु सुजन सेवकाई ॥ ५ ॥
तात भाँति तेहि राखब राऊ । सोच मोर जेहि करै न काऊ ॥ ६ ॥

ōra nibāhēhu bhāyapa bhā'ī. kari pitu mātu sujana sēvakā'ī. 5.
tāta bhām̐ti tēhi rākhaba rā'ū. sōca mōra jēhim karai na kā'ū. 6.

And my dear brother, by serving faithfully and diligently our parents, our near and dear ones, our kith and kin, our subjects and dependents, nay, everyone of our kinsmen and subjects of the kingdom, please live up to your reputation as an honourable brother, and vindicate my confidence and affection for you. (5)

My dear brother (tāta)! Take care of the king (our father, Dasrath) and keep him in good cheer so that he does not worry or grieve for me.

[Please show so much affection and love to him that he does not miss me. Let him not feel the sorrow of separation from me by stepping in my shoes and letting him feel that there is no difference between Ram and Bharat, that Ram is always with him in the form of Bharat.]¹ (6)

[Note—¹A similar idea is conveyed in Valmiki's Ramayana, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Canto 52, verse nos. 34-36; and (ii) Canto 58, verse nos. 22-25.]

लखन कहे कछु बचन कठोरा । बरजि राम पुनि मोहि निहोरा ॥ ७ ॥
बार बार निज सपथ देवाई । कहबि न तात लखन लरिकाई ॥ ८ ॥

lakhana kahē kachu bacana kaṭhōrā. baraji rāma puni mōhi nihōrā. 7.
bāra bāra nija sapatha dēvāī. kahabi na tāta lakhana larikāī. 8.

Sumantra continued: 'Meanwhile, Laxman said something bitter and harsh, at which Lord Ram looked at me and barred me from repeating before anyone anything of what Laxman had said¹. (7)

The Lord repeatedly implored with me and requested me under oath not to tell anything of what Laxman had said in anger, for it was his childishness to say such unwarranted things.

[To wit, the Lord meant that one should not pay any heed to utterances of children as they are innocent in heart, but they do not have the maturity of wisdom to think before speaking wild things, for they actually do not mean what they say.]' (8)

[Note—¹Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 96.]

दो०. कहि प्रनामु कछु कहन लिय सिय भइ सिथिल सनेह ।
थकित बचन लोचन सजल पुलक पल्लवित देह ॥ १५२ ॥
dōhā.

kahi pranāmu kachu kahana liya siya bha'i sithila sanēha.
thakita bacana lōcana sajala pulaka pallavita dēha. 152.

Then, Sumantra briefly refers to Sita by saying: 'Sita told me to convey her respects to you and all others, but then she was so overwhelmed with feelings of affection mixed with sorrows of separation that her voice failed her, she could not speak, tears filled her eyes, and her body became so thrilled that she just kept quiet. [To wit, Sita was overcome with emotions so much that she could not speak a word.]¹ (Doha no. 152)

[Note—¹We have read earlier that Sita had said many things, but all of what she had said was directed at Lord Ram in the form of a reply to what the Lord had said to her, and to Sumantra by way of comforting him and requesting him not to insist on her returning home. This is clear when we read Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 96—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 98; and Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 99.

The only message that Sita meant to be conveyed to her parents-in-law was that they should not worry about her as she would be happy in the forest in the

company of her beloved husband, Lord Ram, and her brother-in-law, Laxman. Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 98.

But presently we read in this Doha that Sumantra says that Sita was tongue-tied and could not speak anything because she was overcome with emotions. It is because by this time, Sumantra, who was closely watching Dasrath's reactions, realized that enough was enough, and the king was so highly tormented and on the edge of collapse that to say anything more regarding what Ram, Laxman or Sita had said would be a virtual torture on the hapless king. So, the wise chief minister cut the discourse short and did not elaborate any further on what Sita had said.

In Veda Vyas' "Adhyatma Ramayan", Ayodhya Kand, Canto 7, verse nos. 12-13 a similar narrative is found, where we read that Sumantra told Dasrath that Sita's eyes were filled with tears as she looked first at Lord Ram to seek his silent permission to speak to me, then turning to me she told me, with her throat almost choked with emotions so much so that she was barely able to say a word, to bow at the feet of her parents-in-law on her behalf and tell them her respects. After that, unable to control herself any longer, she broke down, and weeping inconsolably, she went away with a lowered head.

As we shall read in the following verses, he changed the discourse and narrated in the briefest possible way what happened after that.]

चौ०. तेहि अवसर रघुबर रुख पाई । केवट पारहि नाव चलाई ॥ १ ॥

रघुकुलतिलक चले एहि भाँती । देखउँ ठाढ़ कुलिस धरि छाती ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

tēhi avasara raghubara rukha pāī. kēvaṭa pārahi nāva calāī. 1.

raghukulatilaka calē ēhi bhāmī. dēkha'um̐ ṭhārha kulisa dhari chātī. 2.

At that moment, upon a hint from Lord Ram, who is the most exalted amongst the Raghus (raghubara), the boatman started rowing the boat to take it to the opposite bank of the river¹. (1)

This is how Lord Ram, who is like a crown and the most honourable member in the family of king Raghu (raghukulatilaka), departed from there while I stood dazed and hapless, with a heavy load on my chest, unable to do anything to stop him². (2)

[Note—¹Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 100; and Doha no. 101.

²If we recollect the moments when Lord Ram had gone to the bank of river Ganges to ask the boatman to take him and his companions, Sita, Laxman and Guha Nishad, across the river to the other side, we will remember that Sumantra had already turned back and left the place before Lord Ram had gone to the river.

This is very clear if we closely examine the sequence of events as narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 99—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 100.

But a different narrative is found here, where Sumantra gives the impression that he had personally witnessed the departure of Lord Ram to the other side of the

river on a boat while he had to stand and watch it happening before his eyes helplessly.

Now, how do we reconcile between these two apparently different versions of the sequence of events of those moments when Lord Ram departed from this side of the river Ganges on aboard a boat to go across to its other side?

How do we account for the truthfulness of the version narrated by Sumantra in the background of what we have read earlier, that he had already turned back before Lord Ram and his companions went to the bank of river Ganges?

Here's the answer: After obeying Lord Ram's instructions to return home, Sumantra pretended to turn back homewards, went back for quite some distance, and then parked his chariot somewhere by the side of the road, near a bush or a large tree, and tied the horses there so that neither the chariot was visible from the place where Lord Ram and others stood, nor the wild neighing of the agitated horses could be heard by them. Then he got down and quietly came back to the place where he had left Lord Ram and his companions a while ago, taking care to keep himself hidden from view by walking with a bent body and crouching as much as possible, taking advantage of the natural cover provided by large trees with thick foliage, as well as shrubs, bushes and other wild plants that grew abundantly on the side of the rural path. Once he was within eyeshot of the bank of the river, he sat quietly to watch what was happening there, and so he could witness all the developments that he narrates to king Dasrath now.

It means that Sumantra was not lying while telling Dasrath that he was a helpless witness to Lord Ram's departure to the other side of the river aboard a boat.]

मैं आपन किमि कहाँ कलेसू । जिअत फिरेउँ लेइ राम सँदेसू ॥ ३ ॥

अस कहि सचिव बचन रहि गयऊ । हानि गलानि सोच बस भयऊ ॥ ४ ॥

mair̥m āpana kimi kahaur̥m kalēsū. ji'ata phirē'um̐ lē'i rāma sam̐dēsū. 3.
asa kahi saciva bacana rahi gaya'ū. hāni galāni sōca basa bhaya'ū. 4.

How can I sufficiently tell the immensity of my shock, grief, sorrows and perplexity even as I managed to survive and return to give the message of Lord Ram?

[Fie to me that I survived the intensity of torments that my wretched heart was subjected to, but it was necessary for me not to buckle under the weight of overriding sorrow and profound grief, and instead collect all my wits together and gather all courage that I could harness so that I could come back to Ayodhya and convey Lord Ram's message to them for whom it was meant. Had I allowed myself to yield to my natural impulses at that time, I would have collapsed and died, but that would have prevented me from doing my duty of reporting Lord Ram's message to them for whom it was meant.]¹ (3)

Saying this, the chief minister, Sumantra, found himself lost for words to say anything more even as he was submerged in remorse, overcome with regret, and overwhelmed with a sense of guilt and contrition.

[Why so? Because he had miserably failed in his mission to bring back Lord Ram; because he lived to narrate Lord Ram's departure for the forest without doing anything to stop him. He was immensely worried about the horrible consequences of the bad news that he had brought back, and he faced a future with a great calamity

unfolding in the kingdom right before his eyes, which he would now be required to handle himself with no respite in sight. One worry lead to another, and his vexation and helplessness mounted the more he thought about the developments.] (4)

[Note—¹This episode of Sumantra giving an account to king Dasrath about his failed mission to bring Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman back from the forest, and the horrifying effect it had on the king has been narrated in Veda Vyas' "Adhyatma Ramayan", Ayodhya Kand, Canto 7, verse nos. 6-15.]

सूत बचन सुनतहिं नरनाहू । परेउ धरनि उर दारुन दाहू ॥ ५ ॥
तलफत बिषम मोह मन मापा । माजा मनहुँ मीन कहूँ व्यापा ॥ ६ ॥

sūta bacana sunatahiṁ naranāhū. parē'u dharani ura dāruna dāhū. 5.
talaphata biṣama mōha mana māpā. mājā manahum' mīna kahum' byāpā. 6.

No sooner Dasrath heard the words of the charioteer ("sūta"; here meaning Sumantra, so-called because he had himself driven the chariot sent by the king to bring back Lord Ram) but he swooned and fell down on the ground even as a fire of grief, sorrows and remorse raged fiercely inside his anguished and tormented heart. (5)

His (king Dasrath's) mind became disoriented and he behaved as if he was in an inebriated state, tossing and turning wildly like a fish that has sucked the dirty froth accumulated on the surface of the water of the pond after the first shower of rain¹. (6)

[Note—¹The first shower of rain after a hot and sweltering summer produces a thick layer of froth on the surface of the water in a pond. It not only suffocates the fish as it is unable to breathe fresh air, but when the poor creature comes to the surface of the water in its attempt to gulp down some air it sucks in this froth instead. This chocks the fish and poisons its body as the froth is poisonous in nature. So, either the fish chocks or poisons to death, or even if it survives it is very painful.

The physical and emotional condition of Dasrath was like this fish. He was very agitated and listless; he was virtually gasping for breath, his pulse beat like a hammer inside his veins, and his head swirled as if intoxicated, clouding his mind and dulling all his nerves and senses.]

करि बिलाप सब रोवहिं रानी । महा बिपति किमि जाइ बखानी ॥ ७ ॥
सुनि बिलाप दुखहू दुखु लागा । धीरजहू कर धीरजु भागा ॥ ८ ॥

kari bilāpa saba rōvahiṁ rānī. mahā bipati kimi jā'i bakhānī. 7.
suni bilāpa dukhahū dukhu lāgā. dhīrajahū kara dhīraju bhāgā. 8.

When the queens saw this miserable condition of the king and it became apparent that his survival was difficult, they (the queens) began wailing and lamenting gravely; they wept bitterly and loudly.

How can one describe this ominous scene of such a great horror that descended upon everyone during those difficult times? (7)

Hearing the loud lamentations and mournful wailings of the queens, even Sorrow himself felt sorrowful, and Courage lost its natural quality of grit and endurance to lament and mourn himself!¹ (8)

[Note—¹Here, ‘sorrow’ and ‘courage’ have been personified. Put simply, it means that the lamentations and grief of all the queens knew no bounds; they wailed and wept so bitterly and loudly and so mournfully that the sternest of hearts would wince in horror.]

दो०. भयउ कोलाहलु अवध अति सुनि नृप राउर सोरु ।
बिपुल बिहग बन परेउ निसि मानहुँ कुलिस कठोरु ॥ १५३ ॥
dōhā.

bhaya'u kōlāhalu avadha ati suni nrpa rā'ura sōru.
bipula bihaga bana parē'u nisi mānahum' kulisa kaṭhōru. 153.

No sooner the mournful sound of wailing and lamentations in the royal household reached out of the palace and the ominous news spread in the city, but there was a mighty uproar in the sprawling city itself as chaos erupted everywhere.

It was like the scene witnessed when a thunderbolt suddenly strikes a forest full of resting birds during the night, leading them to panic and creating a mighty noise that shatter the calmness of the night as they flutter away helter-skelter, hurriedly en-masse, screaming, squeaking, crowing, hooting and making all sorts of weird noises in a loud burst of macabre sound that would terrify the strongest of hearts. (Doha no. 153)

[Note—We have read that Sumantra had entered the city after dark, when night fell—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 147.

The whole city of Ayodhya was already in a state of mourning ever since Lord Ram had left it, and it was like a ghostly or haunted place—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 83.

So, the loud wailing and lamentations of the queens and the king could be heard outside the walls of the palace as there was a pin-drop silence everywhere, especially because it was night time. We have read a little while ago that as soon as the news spread that Sumantra has returned, a crowd started forming near his parked chariot, near the gates of the palace—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 147.

These people were the first to hear the sound of mourning and lamenting emanating from inside the palace, and then this ominous news spread throughout the city like wildfire. It became evident by now to everyone that Sumantra had conveyed some bad news to the king, and the latter was in the throes of death due to unbearable grief.]

चौ०. प्रान कंठगत भयउ भुआलू । मनि बिहीन जनु ब्याकुल ब्यालू ॥ १ ॥

इद्रीं सकल बिकल भइँ भारी । जनु सर सरसिज बनू बिनु बारी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

prāna kaṇṭhagata bhaya'u bhu'ālū. mani bihīna janu byākula byālū. 1.
idrīm sakala bikala bha'im'bhārī. janu sara sarasija banu binu bārī. 2.

The Pran (life giving breath; the vital winds that sustain life inside the body of a living being) of the king got stuck or obstructed in his throat (i.e. his throat was choked and he could not breathe, and he started feeling suffocated) just like a serpent becomes highly agitated, listless, nervous and agonized fearing an impending death after it has lost its precious gem, known as the 'Mani', that is the only source of light for the poor creature, for without it would certainly starve to death¹. (1)

His entire body was agitated and all his sense organs were on their edge just like the case of a cluster of lotus flowers that face the ominous prospect of extinction when the water in the pond dries up². (2)

[Note—¹It is believed that there exists a special type of serpent which has a luminescent sac that forms naturally on its hood. This sac is filled with some secretions from the serpents own body, but it glows in the dark. The serpent would come out of its hole in the night looking for food, and it can see anything only in the light of this sac. If the sac is removed, the serpent is unable to see anything, and in due course of time it would die because it would not be able to see and find its prey. And even during the time it manages to survive without food, the condition of the serpent would as hopeless and miserable as that of a blind man who somehow manages to survive without the benefit of eyesight, because it would be a burdensome, uncomfortable and despondent life of dependence upon others that would only exacerbate his sense of loneliness, depravation, misery, suffering and wants of different kinds to such an extent that by-and-by he would prefer death than to live a miserable life without the basic facility to see anything at all.

In the context of Dasrath not being able survive without Lord Ram just as the serpent that is also unable to survive in the absence of its Mani, we should also refer to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 151 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede it; (b) Ayodhya Kand, (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 33; (iii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 143.

²Lotus flowers can't survive without water. So, when the water in the pond begins to dry up due to any cause, the cluster of lotus flowers that live in that pond become horrified at the prospect of their slow death. Similarly, Dasrath was not certain that he would die a slow and agonized death in the absence of Lord Ram. Till now he had somehow managed to keep himself alive in the hope that Sumantra would succeed in bringing Lord Ram back, but when the chief minister's attempts to persuade the Lord to return came a cropper and he had to return empty-handed, all hopes of Dasrath were dashed, and he became sure that he would not survive.]

कौसल्याँ नृपु दीख मलाना । रबिकुल रबि अँथयउ जियँ जाना ॥ ३ ॥

उर धरि धीर राम महतारी । बोली बचन समय अनुसारी ॥ ४ ॥

kausalyāṃ nṛpu dīkha malānā. rabikula rabi am̐thaya'u jiyam̐ jānā. 3.
ura dhari dhīra rāma mahatārī. bōlī bacana samaya anusārī. 4.

When Kaushalya (the senior-most queen and the mother of Lord Ram) saw the gloomy and miserable state of the king, she concluded in her heart that the sun of the Solar race was about to set (i.e. Dasrath was about to die). (3)

Lord Ram's mother gathered courage and spoke words that were appropriate for the occasion. (4)

नाथ समुझि मन करिअ बिचारू । राम बियोग पयोधि अपारू ॥ ५ ॥
करनधार तुम्ह अवध जहाजू । चढ़ेउ सकल प्रिय पथिक समाजू ॥ ६ ॥
धीरजु धरिअ त पाइअ पारू । नाहिं त बूढ़िहि सबु परिवारू ॥ ७ ॥
जौं जियँ धरिअ बिनय पिय मोरी । रामु लखनु सिय मिलहिं बहोरी ॥ ८ ॥

nātha samujhi mana kari'a bicārū. rāma biyōga payōdhi apārū. 5.
karanadhāra tumha avadha jahājū. caṛhē'u sakala priya pathika samājū. 6.
dhīraju dhari'a ta pā'i'a pārū. nāhiṃ ta būḍiḥi sabu parivārū. 7.
jaum̐ jiyam̐ dhari'a binaya piya mōrī. rāmu lakhanu siya milahiṃ bahōrī. 8.

[Kaushalya tried to pacify her distraught and agitated husband in the best possible way she could, comforting him and encouraging him to show wisdom, patience, forbearance, fortitude and resilience in the face of adversity and an unprecedented crisis that has so suddenly hit the family and the kingdom like a thunderbolt. There was a lot at stake, and the king being the guardian and the lord of all those who are dependent upon him, it is his moral duty to disregard the grief and suffering caused to him at the personal level in order to support and provide comfort to all others, to ensure that others are kept happy though he might be suffering within himself—for a king is duty-bound to take care of his subjects even if it means a lot of personal sacrifices at the personal level.]

Kaushalya said to Dasrath as she tried to console and encourage him to: 'Oh my lord (nātha), please ponder over the prevailing situation patiently, and with due application of wisdom, without allowing emotions to get the better of thee.

The grief attending separation from Lord Ram is like a huge and turbulent ocean. (5)

On this ocean floats a ship symbolized by the kingdom of Ayodhya, of which thou art the commander and the helmsman, and the passengers who have come on board this ship are represented by all our near and dear ones, as well as every single citizen of Ayodhya. (6)

If thou showest wisdom, courage, resilience, patience, fortitude and forbearance, then we shalt cross this turbulent ocean to reach safely to the other side, for otherwise we shalt all certainly sink (if thou lovest courage and mental bearing in this time of crisis, and allow thyself to buckle under the pressure of adversities). (7)

My dear husband (piya morē)! If thou pay heed to my advice and bear in thine heart my earnest prayers to thee, then be reassured that one day thy shalt be able to meet Lord Ram, Laxman and Sita once again.¹ (8)

[Note—¹Kaushalya meant that if Dasrath dies, what will he gain? The main reason why he would die is that the grief of separation from Lord Ram, Laxman and Sita is unbearable by him, but dying would solve no problem. On the other hand, if Dasrath shows patience and courageously pass the time the Lord is in the forest for fourteen years, then at the end of these years he would certainly be able to see the Lord and embrace him once again. Fourteen years is nothing in comparison to the length of a person's life, and the days would fly away as the countdown for the Lord's return had already begun from the day he had left Ayodhya. Each passing day means so much the less time that is left for Lord's return and being reunited with Dasrath.

Hence, instead of lamenting and preferring to die, in which case he would lose all chances of seeing Lord Ram again, Dasrath will be wiser if he patiently waits out the time and let the clock click in the reverse direction, bringing the day of Lord Ram's return much closer by the passage of every second, every minute and every hour of the day that passes by. In this way, he has everything to gain and nothing to lose.]

दो०. प्रिया बचन मृदु सुनत नृपु चितयउ आँखि उघारि ।
तलफत मीन मलीन जनु सींचत सीतल बारि ॥ १५४ ॥

dōhā.

priyā bacana mṛdu sunata nṛpu citaya'u āmkhi ughāri.
talaphata mīna malīna janu sīncata sītala bāri. 154.

When the suffering and tormented king heard these soothing words of his beloved wife ("priyā"; Kaushalya), he felt a bit comforted and opened his eyes to look around, as if a fish, in the throes of death by lack of water, finds some comfort and relief when cool water is sprinkled on it¹. (Doha no. 154)

[Note—¹This is a wonderful example of apt metaphors, similes and analogies so characteristic of Ram Charit Manas. The physical and mental condition of Dasrath can easily be visualized when one compares them with that of a fish taken out of water. The poor and helpless creature is subjected to extreme stress and suffers intense pain, but if someone sprinkles cool water on it, it finds immediate relief and silently blesses the person for sprinkling water on its body.

King Dasrath was suffering no less than this fish, and when Kaushalya spoke to him affectionately, using comforting words that were meant to encourage him, to console him, urging him to show courage and not to yield to sufferings, as it was a testing time for him and he ought to come out trumps in this test, for at the end he will be rewarded by being reunited with Lord Ram once again, the king felt a bit relieved. He took a deep breath, sighed, and opened his weary eyes.]

चौ०. धरि धीरजु उठि बैठ भुआलू । कहु सुमंत्र कहँ राम कृपालू ॥ १ ॥

कहाँ लखनु कहँ रामु सनेही । कहँ प्रिय पुत्रबधू बैदेही ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

dhari dhīraju uṭhi baiṭha bhu'ālū. kahu sumantra kaham' rāma krpālū. 1.
kahām' lakhanu kaham' rāmu sanēhī. kaham' priya putrabadhū baidēhī. 2.

Recovering himself and resigning to his doomed fate, the king (Dasrath) slowly got up from his reclining position and sat down (as if he was very weary and drained of all his energy).

He said dolefully to his chief minister who was seated near him: 'Sumanatra, please tell me where the most merciful and compassionate Ram is. (1)

Prithee, tell me where Laxman, my most beloved Lord Ram, and my dear daughter-in-law Sita (Vaidehi) are (at present).¹' (2)

[Note—¹Sumantra has just a few moments ago briefed Dasrath that he (Sumantra) had seen Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman board a boat to cross river Ganges and go to the other side—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 153.

So, Dasrath wishes to know now how far and in which direction they might have gone, and he wishes that he be taken there by Sumantra, for otherwise he won't survive—this is clearly stated by him in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 149.]

बिलपत राउ बिकल बहु भाँती । भइ जुग सरिस सिराति न राती ॥ ३ ॥

तापस अंध साप सुधि आई । कौसल्यहि सब कथा सुनाई ॥ ४ ॥

bilapata rā'u bikala bahu bhāmṭī. bha'i juga sarisa sirāti na rātī. 3.
tāpasa andha sāpa sudhi āī. kausalyahi saba kathā sunāī. 4.

The distraught and despondent king was listless as he lamented, wailed and grieved dolefully in a variety of ways. The hours of the night seemed to stretch endlessly as if it had no end (and there was no hope of dawn)¹. (3)

In those sad moments the king became very pensive as he recollected the curse cast upon him by a blind ascetic, a curse that has now borne fruit and put him on the threshold of death².

The distraught and hapless king (sighed deeply and) took Kaushalya in confidence to tell her that particular episode (by way of an explanation as to why the things had taken such an unexpected and dramatic but nasty turn, which resulted in the present situation when he was dying in grief of separation from his dearest son, Lord Ram, without any hope of recourse to any sort of relief of any kind). (4)

[Note—¹Good times often seem too short, while bad times seem to stretch endlessly. Every sad moment seems an hour, and a day of sorrows just don't seem to end, while hours and days spent joyfully seem simply to fly away before one could even properly enjoy the moments of happiness.

What is meant here is that as far as Dasrath was concerned, he did not want to see the dawn of the next day without being able to see Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman. Hence, for Dasrath the night of sorrows and lamentations stretched endlessly as there was no chance of him seeing his beloved Lord Ram any time in the near future, and it would be practically impossible for him to endure the intensity of the suffering of separation from the Lord for fourteen long years when he is unable to bear the pain for even an hour.

²King Dasrath remembered the episode of a young ascetic Shrawan Kumar and his blind but aged parents who had cursed the king that one day he would die grieving for his dearest son even as they are dying grieving for their own son Shrawan Kumar who was unknowingly and mistakenly killed by Dasrath during his younger days.

This story is narrated in detail by Dasrath himself to Kaushalya in (a) Valmiki's Ramayana, Ayodhya Kand, Canto nos. 63-64; and (b) Veda Vyas' "Adhyatma Ramayan", Ayodhya Kand, Canto 7, verse nos. 19-40.

The story in brief is this:-

During his younger days, Dasrath had gone hunting in the forests surrounding Ayodhya during one night, and while searching for game he went near the banks of river Saryu. It was dark. From a distance he heard a soft sound resembling the trumpet of a young elephant emanating from the direction of the river. Right at that time, a young hermit named Shrawan Kumar had gone to the river to fill a pitcher of water for his blind and thirsty parents whom he was taking on a pilgrimage. The sound which Dasrath mistook for the soft trumpet of an elephant was actually made by the gurgling of water as it filled a narrow-necked pitcher which Shrawan Kumar was filling to take to quench the thirst of his aged parents who were waiting for him to bring water for them at some safe distance away.

As is quite natural with young princes who are out hunting within their domain, Dasrath did not think twice nor did he bother to investigate the source of the sound before shooting a sharp arrow in the direction of the source of the sound. He had thought that if he killed this elephant with his shot, he would take it as a trophy back to the palace to show everyone how good an archer and a sharpshooter he was.

But unfortunately for Dasrath, the arrow struck Shrawan Kumar directly. The pious hermit did not mind his own death, but was worried that he failed to take drinking water for his thirsty parents who were totally dependent upon him as they were blind.

So, when Dasrath came to see what game he had shot down, he was for a mortal shock to find that he had killed a hermit, who lay mortally wounded on the ground, with a half-filled pitcher of water lying near him. Seeing Dasrath, Shrawan Kumar briefed him about the whole situation, and implored the young prince not to waste time but to fill the pitcher with water and take it to his parents, asking them to quench their thirst. If they wish to know what happened to their son, then Dasrath must tell them truthfully the whole event as it happened.

Making this last wish to Dasrath, the young hermit, Shrawan Kumar, died. Shocked and confounded beyond measure, Dasrath did as asked by the dying hermit, as he feared severe repercussions on him if he failed to carry out the last wish of a dying man.

When Dasrath approached the blind parents of Shrawan Kumar and asked them to drink water, they could immediately recognize from his voice that he was not their son. When asked who he was and what had happened to their son, Dasrath narrated everything. The distraught and utterly crestfallen parents then asked Dasrath

to take them to the place where their son Shrawan Kumar's body lay. Upon reaching the spot, the two elderly parents of Shrawan Kumar wailed and lamented gravely, and out of grief for their son they died too. But at the time of death, they cursed Dasrath that one day he would be separated from his son whom he loved the most, and then he too would die out of grief for him even as they (the two elderly couple) are dying in grief of their own son Shrawan Kumar.

It is this incident that Dasrath is reminded of at this hour of his own death.]

भयउ बिकल बरनत इतिहासा । राम रहित धिग जीवन आसा ॥ ५ ॥

सो तनु राखि करब मैं काहा । जेहिं न प्रेम पनु मोर निबाहा ॥ ६ ॥

bhaya'u bikala baranata itihāsā. rāma rahita dhiga jīvana āsā. 5.

sō tanu rākhi karaba mair̥n kāhā. jēhir̥n na prēma panu mōra nibāhā. 6.

Dasrath became excessively agitated, tormented and remorseful as he narrated the aforesaid incident of the long past to Kaushalya (as he sorely regretted his folly committed long ago, became sad and hopeless because there was scant chance of redemption in the face of that old curse showing its effect now).

He lamented and felt exceedingly sad, muttering dolefully and pensively: 'Woe to a life that is lived without Lord Ram. There is no hope in life, and neither is there any chance of my surviving in the absence of Lord Ram'. (5)

What purpose will this gross body serve me, what gain would I get by keeping it; what would I do with a mortal body which fails to keep its vows of love and affection for Lord Ram, and rescinds on its own declaration that it cannot survive in the absence of the Lord?² (6)

[Note—¹King Dasrath was sure that he will have to die, and nothing and no one can save him now—because this death of his is due to the curse cast upon him long ago for his own mistake, and there is no cure for it.

Hence, he quietly came to terms with his doomed fate, and calmed down a lot, for there was no use in fretting and fuming unnecessarily, as his death due to grief of separation from his son was forecast a long ago.

This realization helped to sooth Dasrath's agitated nerves, and he got an answer to his own question raised by way of wonderment that he is being made to suffer for no fault of his—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 77 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it.

Further, what happened to Dasrath endorses the statement of Laxman when he told Guha Nishad that every person is responsible for his own actions, and he has to suffer the consequences himself, for no body else can share it. Hence, one must be careful with what one does, and it is useless to blame others later on for the consequences—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 92 along with Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes it, and Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it.

²In this context, refer to the following verses of Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precede Doha no. 151; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 208; (b) Ayodhya Kand, (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 33.]

हा रघुनंदन प्रान पिरीते । तुम्ह बिनु जिअत बहुत दिन बीते ॥ ७ ॥
 हा जानकी लखन हा रघुबर । हा पितु हित चित चातक जलधर ॥ ८ ॥

hā raghunandana prāna pirītē. tumha binu ji'ata bahuta dina bītē. 7.
 hā jānakī lakhana hā raghubara. hā pitu hita cita cātaka jaladhara. 8.

Lamenting and grieving for Lord Ram, Dasrath dolefully wailed: 'Ah Raghunandan ("raghunandana"; Lord Ram, the son of the family of king Raghu) who art the dearest of my Pran (life forces; my soul)! A lot many days have passed without thee. (7)

Ah Janki (Sita)! Ah Laxman! Ah Raghubar ("raghubara"; Lord Ram, the most exalted amongst the members of king Raghu's family)! Thou always gladdened the heart of thine father, and made him cheerful and happy just like the rain-bearing cloud keeps the Chatak bird delighted and happy.¹ (8)

[Note—¹The Chatak (sparrow hawk) is so much in love with the rain-bearing cloud that it has vowed not to drink any kind of water except that which falls as rain drops from the cloud and lands directly in its beak. So therefore, the sight of the cloud thrills the bird, and it becomes exhilarated. In the absence of the cloud, it stares death in the face because of thirst.

Dasrath cites this example to emphasize that the sight of Lord Ram always made him feel very happy, and in the absence of the Lord he would not survive, because he would be overcome with grief that would kill him in the same way as thirst kills the bird.]

दो०. राम राम कहि राम कहि राम राम कहि राम ।
 तनु परिहरि रघुबर बिरहँ राउ गयउ सुरधाम ॥ १५५ ॥
 dōhā.

rāma rāma kahi rāma kahi rāma rāma kahi rāma.
 tanu parihari raghubara biraham' rā'u gaya'u suradhāma. 155.

Calling out the name of Lord Ram repeatedly, crying 'Ram-Ram' over and over again most affectionately but with an agonized tone and a sinking heart, the king (Dasrath) shed off his mortal coil (i.e. died) in grief of separation from Lord Ram (raghubara), and went to the abode of the Gods (in heaven)¹. (Doha no. 155)

[Note—¹ This poignant episode of Dasrath's death has been narrated by Tulsidas in his book Geetawali Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, verse nos. 56-59 also.

A question arises here. It is proclaimed in the scriptures, and Lord Shiva has himself declared it, that if one says the holy name of Lord Ram, viz. "Ram", even once, the soul of the dying person finds eternal bliss, beatitude and peace. The dying person finds liberation and deliverance from the cycle of birth and death for ever, and he attains final emancipation and salvation*. Going to heaven is not the ultimate

destination of the soul, for all those who go to heaven would have to re-enter the cycle of birth and death after their time in the heaven ends. {*Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 19 (Lord Shiva); (b) Aranya Kand, (ii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 31 (Jatayu); (c) Kishindha Kand, (iii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 10 (Baali).}

Dasrath had said the holy name of Lord Ram six times, not one. So, why did he not find eternal and final deliverance for his soul instead of going to the heaven from where he would have to go higher up if he wishes to attain true bliss and eternal peace for his soul?

The answer is this: He had wanted to see Lord Ram crowned as the king of Ayodhya, and he had died in grief because he could not see the Lord. To wit, there were two things he had wanted to see done but failed to see his wishes fulfilled—one, to see Lord Ram as the king of Ayodhya, and two, to physically see Lord Ram in person, either if the Lord comes back or if he was taken to the place where the Lord was. Both these wishes remained unfulfilled. If a man dies with some unfulfilled desires, then he has to take another birth to get his wishes fulfilled. This is why Dasrath could not attain final deliverance for his soul by way of dissolution and merger of his soul with the cosmic Soul, but lived as a ‘Spirit’ in the heaven.

We would read by-and-by that when the war of Lanka ended and Lord Ram became victorious, Dasrath had come to greet the Lord in the form of a ‘Spirit’ along with all the other Gods who also came to pay their obeisance to the Lord—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 112.

Another very important and relevant point that we must note here is that Dasrath had died wailing for and remembering Lord Ram as his ‘son’, as he had forgotten for the time being that the one whom he thinks to be his son was ‘not his son’ at all. We can cite two crucial reasons for it. One is that Lord Ram was the Supreme Being who had manifested in the form of a human being to fulfill many obligations, and one of them was to oblige king Manu and his queen Satrupa who had wanted to see the Supreme Being in the form of their son; that was all. The other reason is that the Atma or the ‘soul’ of all living beings has no relationships with anyone, for it is pure consciousness that is free from all worldly considerations, such as being a son or a father of anyone. The true identity of Lord Ram was not his physical form for which Dasrath was wailing and lamenting, but it was a cosmic form known as the Parmatma, or the Supreme Atma, which is synonymous with pure cosmic Consciousness that is all-pervading, omnipresent and without any relations.

Hence, Dasrath was under delusions that Lord Ram was his son, for the Lord was no one’s son. Had Dasrath been free from misconceptions, he would have realized the above mentioned facts vis-à-vis Lord Ram, and then there was no cause for his behaving in the way he did. The lesson we learn from Dasrath’s episode is that we ought to practice detachment and dispassion in life, not allowing ourselves to be unduly involved in anything or attached with anyone related to this gross world, and instead focus our attention on the higher objective of attaining liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation for our soul so that this soul is freed from the entrapment of the endless cycle of transmigration.

In the case of Dasrath we observe that inspite of being so fortunate as to have the rarest of rare honour of having the Supreme Being so near to him that he was able to have daily contact with the Lord at a very personal level, and thoroughly enjoy the bliss that is got with this contact, he still did not realize who the Lord was, and hence, instead of dying peacefully and blissfully to attain emancipation and salvation, to have eternal beatitude and felicity, he died a miserable death like a man suffering

from a grave and terminal disease that is so serious that even the last hour of his life before death is spent in great pain.]

चौ०. जिअन मरन फलु दसरथ पावा । अंड अनेक अमल जसु छावा ॥ १ ॥

जिअत राम बिधु बदन न्हारा । राम बिरह करि मरनु सँवारा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

ji'ana marana phalu dasaratha pāvā. aṇḍa anēka amala jasū chāvā. 1.

ji'ata rāma bidhu badanu nihārā. rāma biraha kari maranu saṁvārā. 2.

*Dasrath got the great reward of taking birth in this world and dying (because everyone who is born must die, but rarely does one got an opportunity to have the Supreme Being as his beloved son).

His glories spread in the entire world in the same way as countless rays of light (i.e. the sunlight) that emanate from a single illuminated ball in the sky (i.e. the sun) spread in all the directions of the world to illuminate it.

[*This verse can be read and interpreted in the following way too: “King Dasrath got whatever was due to him as his personal share either in the form of suffering or as joy and happiness during the period of his life between his birth and death in this mortal world. Nevertheless, his good fortune that it was in his household that the Supreme Being took birth as Lord Ram had helped to spread his fame and glories in all the directions of the world, as it was a stellar achievement that was unmatched, and not easy to achieve, in the same way as the glory of the sun that it is alone able to illuminate the entire visible world, without any aid, is unmatched by any other single heavenly body, or even by all the heavenly bodies taken together.”] (1)

While he was alive he lived watching affectionately the beautiful moon-like face of Lord Ram at close quarters and to his heart's content; and he died remembering the Lord and muttering his holy name (that is famed for providing comfort and peace to the soul of the dying man). (2)

सोक बिकल सब रोवहिं रानी । रूपु सीलु बलु तेजु बखानी ॥ ३ ॥

करहिं बिलाप अनेक प्रकारा । परहिं भूमितल बारहिं बारा ॥ ४ ॥

sōka bikala saba rōvahiṁ rānī. rūpu sīlu balu tēju bakhānī. 3.

karahiṁ bilāpa anēka prakārā. parahiṁ bhūmitala bārahiṁ bārā. 4.

[The royal household was plunged in gloom and grief as soon as Dasrath died.]

All the queens became highly agitated and mourned the death of Dasrath as they started weeping and lamenting gravely while fondly recalling and praising the king's greatness, the charm and appeal of his physical presence, his virtues and glories, as well as his strength, valour and powers in laudatory terms. (3)

They wailed and grieved in a variety of ways, sorely lamenting at their widowhood, even as they swooned and fell down on the ground repeatedly in abject despair. (4)

बिलपहिं बिकल दास अरु दासी । घर घर रुदनु करहिं पुरबासी ॥ ५ ॥
 अँथयउ आजु भानुकुल भानू । धरम अवधि गुन रूप निधानू ॥ ६ ॥

bilapahim bikala dāsa aru dāsī. ghara ghara rudanu karahim purabāsī. 5.
 amṭhaya'u āju bhānukula bhānū. dharama avadhi guna rūpa nidhānū. 6.

Similarly, all the royal attendants, the servants and the maids, wailed and grieved sorely inside the palace. Outside, a pall of gloom and dismay descended on the city as in every household the distressed citizens wept and wailed to mourn the death of Dasrath. (5)

They lamented: 'Today, the sun of the Solar race has set¹, because he (Dasrath) was an epitome of Dharma (the virtues of righteousness, probity, propriety and goodness in thought and conduct), was a personified form of all good virtues, and had a personality that was unmatched in this world.' (6)

[Note—¹Earlier, Kaushalya too has made a similar observation in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 154.]

गारीं सकल कैकड़हि देहीं । नयन बिहीन कीन्ह जग जेहीं ॥ ७ ॥
 एहि बिधि बिलपत रैनि बिहानी । आए सकल महामुनि ग्यानी ॥ ८ ॥

gārīm sakala kaika'ihī dēhīm. nayana bihīna kīnha jaga jēhīm. 7.
 ēhi bidhi bilapata raini bihānī. ā'ē sakala mahāmuni gyānī. 8.

Everyone singled out Kaikeyi and accused her in vicious terms for bringing this misfortune on all, for she had been instrumental in causing intense suffering to one and all as if she had forced them to become blind¹. (7)

The whole night was thus spent in lamentations, wailings, grieving and mourning. At day break, no sooner the news spread but all the great sages (i.e. senior Brahmins, the guru sage Vasistha, and all other sages who lived in and around Ayodhya, and who heard of the calamity that had befallen on the city) came and assembled there (i.e. either inside the premises of the palace, or in its vicinity, or elsewhere within the city walls). (8)

[Note—¹There is no other punishment more grave and no other sin worse than to make a person blind. The citizens are unanimous in their view that all the misfortunes that have descended upon Ayodhya is the handiwork of this single wicked lady, i.e. Kaikeyi. In this context, refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 47; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 51.]

दो०. तब बसिष्ठ मुनि समय सम कहि अनेक इतिहास ।

सोक नेवारेउ सबहि कर निज बिग्यान प्रकास ॥ १५६ ॥

dōhā.

taba basiṣṭha muni samaya sama kahi anēka itihāsa.
sōka nēvārē'u sabahi kara nija bigyāna prakāsa. 156.

Then, sage Vasistha (being the senior-most amongst the assembled sages, and also as the chief priest of the kingdom and the guru of the royal family) took charge in consoling and comforting the disconsolate and distressed people by citing many scriptural instances and episodes in order to provide solace to them.

His wisdom, knowledge, wit and wise words acted as a source of light that dispelled the darkness of gloom and grief of all as they found comfort and peace in his spiritual outlook and advice that was appropriate for such occasions. (Doha no. 156)

चौ०. तेल नावँ भरि नृप तनु राखा । दूत बोलाइ बहुरि अस भाषा ॥ १ ॥
धावहु बेगि भरत पहिँ जाहू । नृप सुधि कतहुँ कहहु जनि काहू ॥ २ ॥
एतनेइ कहेहु भरत सन जाई । गुर बोलाइ पठयउ दोउ भाई ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

tēla nāvam'bhari nrpa tanu rākhā. dūta bōlā'i bahuri asa bhāṣā. 1.
dhāvahu bēgi bharata pahim jāhū. nrpa sudhi katahum'kahahu jani kāhū. 2.
ētanē'i kahēhu bharata sana jāī. gura bōlā'i paṭhaya'u dō'u bhāī. 3.

The mortal remains of the king (Dasrath) was kept in a large container filled with oil (so as to preserve it till the time his son Bharat could come back to perform his last rites).

Then, sage Vasistha summoned royal messengers and told them as follows—

(1)

‘Make haste and go forthwith to Bharat, but do not divulge what has happened to the king (Dasrath) to anyone (either on the way, or even to Bharat himself)¹. (2)

Just tell Bharat that his guru (i.e. sage Vasistha) has sent for him an urgent message that the two brothers (i.e. Bharat and Shatrughan) should come back immediately.²

(3)

[Note—¹This was very important from the security point of view. The death of king Dasrath left a vacuum in Ayodhya, with none of his sons present there to step in and take charge. If this became known to the enemies, one can imagine what horrifying consequences it would have. There was always a chance that they would attack the city immediately, which would mean complete chaos and mayhem within the city. They could block the path of Bharat's arrival and take him hostage before he manages to come inside the city, as he would have no army to support him while returning home from another place outside the boundaries of Ayodhya.

So, the messengers who were drafted by sage Vasistha were told to keep mum about Dasrath's death, and go straight to Bharat.

²Bharat and Shatrughan had gone to visit Bharat's maternal uncle's place. Manthara cites this to instigate Kaikeyi when she told her that they were sent away from Ayodhya as part of a wider conspiracy hatched by Kaushalya in connivance with Dasrath so that they can slyly appoint Lord Ram to the throne in the absence of Bharat, for they feared he would stake his claim on the throne, and since Lord Ram loved his brother dearly, he would agree to it. Hence, to prevent this from happening, the king and his eldest queen decided to send Bharat out before declaring their intention to appoint Lord Ram to the throne—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 14; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 18; (iii) Doha no. 19 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it.

This argument of Manthara was so convincing that Kaikeyi believed her, and what happened then is well documented in the narrative that followed.]

सुनि मुनि आयसु धावन धाए । चले बेग बर बाजि लजाए ॥ ४ ॥
 अनरथु अवध अरंभेउ जब तें । कुसगुन होहिं भरत कहूँ तब तें ॥ ५ ॥
 देखहिं राति भयानक सपना । जागि करहिं कटु कोटि कलपना ॥ ६ ॥

sunī muni āyasu dhāvana dhā'ē. calē bēga bara bāji lajā'ē. 4.
 anarathu avadha arambhē'u jaba tēm. kusaguna hōhim bharata kahum' taba
 tēm. 5.
 dēkhahim rāti bhayānaka sapanā. jāgi karahim kaṭu kōṭi kalapanā. 6.

After hearing the sage's instructions, the messengers departed immediately with all speed as if they were flying. So fast they went that their pace would put to shame the fastest of horses. (4)

Meanwhile, no sooner misfortunes and calamities had started occurring in Ayodhya, but Bharat started witnessing many bad omens. (5)

He started having nightmares and see horrifying dreams¹. When he woke up alarmed, he would start wondering and speculating as to what they portended, what they meant, what their significance was. [These wild and alarming thoughts had Bharat on tenterhooks. He was very nervous, uneasy and worried.] (6)

[Note—¹The kind of bad dreams that Bharat had has been described in Valmiki's Ramayana, Ayodhya Kand, Canto 69, verse nos. 8-18. Now, let us see briefly what Bharat saw in his bad dreams as follows:

‘Bharata replied to his friend who spoke to him:

"I have seen a dream in which my father with his soiled body and with his hair disheveled was falling from the top of a mountain into a polluted pond defiled with cow dung." (8)

"He was seen by me, as he was floating in that pond defiled with cow dung, drinking an oil through his hollowed palms and laughing again and again" (9)

"Thereafter, having eaten cooked rice mixed with ginger seeds repeatedly, with his head bent down and with his whole body smeared with oil, he plunged into the oil itself." (10)

"I saw in the dream, the ocean dry up, the moon fall on the ground, the earth molested as if covered by darkness, a tusk of an elephant (on which the monarch rode) broken to pieces, a blazing fire suddenly extinguished, the earth risen, the various trees dry up, and the mountains whirl up into a mist." (11-13)

"I saw my father in the dream, wearing black clothes, sitting on a stool made of iron and women with black and reddish brown complexion deriding the king." (14)

"My father, the virtuous man, adorned with red garlands and his body besmeared with sandal paste and seated in a chariot drawn by asses, proceeded hurriedly towards the south." (15)

"I saw an ugly faced female demon, wearing red colored clothes, laughingly dragging away the king." (16)

"This fearful dream was seen thus by me during that night. I myself or the king or Laxman may die." (17)

"If in a dream, a person sees a man going in a chariot, yoked with donkeys, the smoke of a funeral pyre will soon be seen ascending him." (18)

"For this reason, I have become sad and gloomy in my heart. My throat seems to be drying up. My mind is not at ease." (19)]

बिप्र जेवाँइ देहिं दिन दाना । सिव अभिषेक करहिं बिधि नाना ॥ ७ ॥
मागहिं हृदयँ महेस मनाई । कुसल मातु पितु परिजन भाई ॥ ८ ॥

bipra jēvāṁī dēhiṁ dina dānā. siva abhiṣēka karahiṁ bidhi nānā. 7.
māgahiṁ hr̥dayaṁ mahēsa manāī. kusala mātu pitu parijana bhāī. 8.

In order to mitigate and overcome any evil consequences that these bad omens hinted at, Bharat did his best to alleviate danger by offering meals to Brahmins and making charities, as well as offering oblations to Lord Shiva and sprinkling water on his idol by doing elaborate rituals in a variety of ways. (7)

He prayed to Lord Shiva and asked the Lord to bless him so that everything would be fine back home, seeking from the Lord the welfare and well-being of his parents, kinsmen and brothers (i.e. Lord Ram and Laxman). (8)

दो०. एहि बिधि सोचत भरत मन धावन पहुँचे आइ ।
गुर अनुसासन श्रवन सुनि चले गनेसु मनाइ ॥ १५७ ॥
dōhā.

ēhi bidhi sōcata bharata mana dhāvana pahum̐cē ā'i.
gura anusāsana śravana suni calē ganēsu manā'i. 157.

In the aforesaid way, while Bharat was thus feeling very worried and spent his time anxiously, the messengers (sent by Vasistha) went there to meet him.

No sooner Bharat heard the orders of his guru but he departed immediately for the journey back home after invoking the blessings of Lord Ganesh and paying obeisance to him¹. (Doha no. 157)

[Note—¹When Lord Ram had started for the forest, he too had first offered his obeisance to Lord Ganesh before departure—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 81.]

चौ०. चले समीर बेग हय हाँके । नाघत सरित सैल बन बाँके ॥ १ ॥
 हृदयँ सोचु बड़ कछु न सोहाई । अस जानहिं जियँ जाउँ उड़ाई ॥ २ ॥
 एक निमेष बरष सम जाई । एहि बिधि भरत नगर निअराई ॥ ३ ॥
 caupāī.

calē samīra bēga haya hām̐kē. nāghata sarita saila bana bām̐kē. 1.
 hṛdayam̐ sōcu baṛa kachu na sōhāī. asa jānahim̐ jiyam̐ jā'um̐ uṛāī. 2.
 ēka nimēṣa baraṣa sama jāī. ēhi bidhi bharata nagara ni'arāī. 3.

Bharat spurred his horses to make them fly as fast as the wind, speedily crossing difficult terrain consisting of rivers, hills and forests that came in the way. (1)

He was mightily worried and anxiety had overtaken his heart so much so that nothing would please him or alleviate his fears, nor give him any comfort¹. He wished that if it was possible, he would prefer to fly (like a bird to reach home). (2)

A moment that passed seemed like a year to him.

In this way, he arrived on the outskirts of Ayodhya. (3)

[Note—¹On the way, Bharat passed by beautiful countryside and a landscape with remarkable scenic beauty. There were undulating hills, valleys, dales and meadows, there were verdant forests and green fields, there were pleasant groves and gardens full of flowering trees, and there were fast-flowing rivers and gurgling streams. Ordinarily, a traveller would thoroughly enjoy such sights as he moves towards his destination, for they were feasts for the eyes of a weary traveller on a long journey, but Bharat's mind was occupied with other thoughts, and he had no inclination or time to pay attention to the beauty of Nature as a means of diversion to break the monotony of a long journey.]

असगुन होहिं नगर पैठारा । रटहिं कुभाँति कुखेत करारा ॥ ४ ॥
 खर सिआर बोलहिं प्रतिकूला । सुनि सुनि होइ भरत मन सूला ॥ ५ ॥
 श्रीहत सर सरिता बन बागा । नगरु बिसेषि भयावनु लागा ॥ ६ ॥

asaguna hōhim̐ nagara paithārā. raṭahim̐ kubhām̐ti kukhēta karārā. 4.
 khara si'ara bōlahim̐ pratikūlā. suni suni hō'i bharata mana sūlā. 5.
 śrīhata sara saritā bana bāgā. nagaru bisēṣi bhayāvanu lāgā. 6.

As he was entering the city, he observed different kinds of bad omens (that shook his spirits to the core as they portended evil circumstances).

For instance, crows cowed ominously from the most undesirable of places. (4)

The donkeys and jackals cried in a foreboding manner, the sound of which pierced through Bharat's heart as if he was hit by darts. (5)

The gardens and groves, which would normally appear very attractive and pleasing, had lost their charm. Verily indeed, the city as a whole appeared to be exceptionally gloomy, foreboding and ghostly¹. (6)

[Note—¹We must remember that Ayodhya was a very charming city, one that was the envy of the gods as it rivaled the beauty of heaven. Refer: Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precede Doha no. 195; (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 344—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 345; (b) Uttar Kand, (iii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 11; (iv) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 27—to Doha no. 29.

It was this city that turned into a gloomy and foreboding place no less ghostly than a graveyard into which Bharat rode in.]

खग मृग हय गय जाहिं न जोए । राम बियोग कुरोग बिगोए ॥ ७ ॥
नगर नारि नर निपट दुखारी । मनहुँ सबन्हि सब संपति हारी ॥ ८ ॥

khaga mrga haya gaya jāhiṁ na jō'ē. rāma biyōga kurōga bigō'ē. 7.
nagara nāri nara nipaṭa dukhārī. manahum̐ṣabanhi saba sampati hārī. 8.

The birds, animals, elephants, horses—every creature of Ayodhya was so sad, heartbroken and despondent with grief at the separation from Lord Ram that they appeared to be suffering from some grave disease that had spread all over the city like a pandemic afflicting everyone. (7)

The citizens of Ayodhya, both the females and the males, were very distraught and miserable with grief as if all of them had lost whatever assets they had, and were reduced to abject penury. (8)

दो०. पुरजन मिलहिं न कहहिं कछु गवँहिं जोहारहिं जाहिं ।
भरत कुसल पूँछि न सकहिं भय बिषाद मन माहिं ॥ १५८ ॥

dōhā.

purajana milahiṁ na kahahiṁ kachu gavam̐hiṁ jōhārahiṁ jāhiṁ.
bharata kusala pūṁchi na sakahiṁ bhaya biṣāda mana māhiṁ. 158.

The citizens whom Bharat met said nothing to him. They would just bow their heads silently and go their way (as if he were a stranger who was not welcome in the city).

The citizens could not ask for Bharat's well-being, nor wish him or show any sign of welcoming him back home, as they were all overwhelmed with grief and sorrow, and were also fearful of what the future portended for them (should Bharat ascend the throne).¹ (Doha no. 158)

[Note—¹The citizens were weary of Bharat, for they had already seen how cruel and ruthless and selfish his mother Kaikeyi had been. Though many amongst the people believed that Bharat was innocent and had no hand in the conspiracy hatched by his mother to send Lord Ram to the forest*, but they couldn't be certain. {*Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 48 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it.}]

By the cool reception that Bharat received upon return home, he could easily conclude that something very serious has happened in his absence that has made him unwelcome in the city, and that the citizens were gravely annoyed with him.

When we read later on that Bharat had refused to accept the crown inspite of being advised to do so by Kaushalya and sage Vasistha along with other senior members of the royal court, we must keep in mind that from the very beginning Bharat had realized that the citizens were not in his favour, that he was not welcome, as is evident from the cold shoulder he was given and the cool reception he was shown by everyone at the time of his arrival in Ayodhya. Bharat was wise enough to take cognizance of this subtle hint given by the citizens that they don't like him, to conclude that if he did ascend the throne, it would go against the wish of his subjects, and no king can rule peacefully if his subjects are unhappy with him, for then there is always the fear of revolt, either overt or covert, that would pull the rug from under his feet.]

चौ०. हाट बाट नहिं जाइ निहारी । जनु पुर दहँ दिसि लागि दवारी ॥ १ ॥
 आवत सुत सुनि कैकयनंदिनि । हरषी रबिकुल जलरुह चंदिनि ॥ २ ॥
 सजि आरती मुदित उठि धाई । द्वारेहिं भेंटि भवन लेइ आई ॥ ३ ॥
 caupāī.

hāṭa bāṭa nahim jā'i nihārī. janu pura dham̐ disi lāgi davārī. 1.
 āvata suta suni kaikayanandini. haraṣī rabikula jalaruha candini. 2.
 saji āratī mudita uṭhi dhāī. dvārēhim bhēṭi bhavana lē'i āī. 3.

The market places and the streets wore such a gloomy and deserted look that would make one think that a wild fire had broken out in all the directions of the city (forcing everyone to shut shop and run away to safety)¹. (1)

No sooner Kaikeyi ("kaikayanandini"; the daughter of king of Kaikeya), who was like a moon for the lotus represented by the Solar race², heard that her son has arrived, but she became very delighted. (2)

She arranged lighted earthen lamps and other auspicious things on a plate to prepare to welcome her son. Then she went to the palace gate, received Bharat affectionately, and escorted him inside the palace. (3)

[Note—¹In this context, refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 84.

²The moonlight makes the lotus shrivel up, for the lotus opens its petals only in the light of the sun. This natural phenomenon is used here as a metaphor to say that

Kaikeyi had caused much misery and grief for all members of the Solar race to which Lord Ram and his family belonged.]

भरत दुखित परिवारु निहारा । मानहुँ तुहिन बनज बनू मारा ॥ ४ ॥
कैकेई हरषित एहि भाँती । मनहुँ मुदित दव लाइ किराती ॥ ५ ॥

bharata dukhita parivāru nihārā. mānahum̐ tuhina banaja banu mārā. 4.
kaikēī haraṣita ēhi bhām̐tī. manahum̐ mudita dava lā'i kirātī. 5.

Bharat was taken aback and astonished to see a paradoxical situation at home. On the one hand he observed that all other members of his family were very sad and stricken with grief as if a cluster of lotus flowers had been hit by frost in winter¹, -- (4)

--- His mother, on the other hand, was very jubilant and excited even as a hunter woman would feel delighted after she has put the surrounding forest on fire (in the hope that she would now make an easy kill of the deer who are trying to flee from the fire)². (5)

[Note—¹A similar metaphor has been used in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 12.

²Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 84 where we find a similar idea pertaining to the calamity that Kaikeyi has wrought upon Ayodhya.]

सुतहि ससोच देखि मनु मारें । पूँछति नैहर कुसल हमारें ॥ ६ ॥
सकल कुसल कहि भरत सुनाई । पूँछी निज कुल कुसल भलाई ॥ ७ ॥
कहु कहँ तात कहाँ सब माता । कहँ सिय राम लखन प्रिय भ्राता ॥ ८ ॥

sutahi sasōca dēkhi manu mārēm̐. pūm̐chati naihara kusala hamārēm̐. 6.
sakala kusala kahi bharata sunāī. pūm̐chī nija kula kusala bhalāī. 7.
kahu kham̐ tāta kahām̐ saba mātā. kaham̐ siya rāma lakhana priya bhrātā. 8.

Seeing this odd situation where there was a sharp contrast between the behaviour of his mother and other members of the family that was unprecedented and unexpected, Bharat was aghast and most confounded. He became pensive and uncertain about what to make of it.

When his mother observed that her son was in a gloomy mood and has become thoughtful, she felt something was wrong at her own parents' home. So she enquired of Bharat if all was well at his maternal parents' home. (6)

Bharat told her that everything was fine at her parents' home, and then he asked her about the tidings of his own family, if everything was fine at home and in Ayodhya. (7)

He asked Kaikeyi: 'Prithee, tell me where my father (Dasrath), as well as my other mothers (Kaushalya, Sumitra) are.

Tell me, where are Sita and my dear brothers Lord Ram and Laxman.' (8)

दो०. सुनि सुत बचन सनेहमय कपट नीर भरि नैन ।

भरत श्रवन मन सूल सम पापिनि बोली बैन ॥ १५९ ॥

dōhā.

sunī suta bacana sanēhamaya kapaṭa nīra bhari naina.
bharata śravana mana sūla sama pāpini bōlī baina. 159.

Hearing these affectionate, innocent and polite words of her son (Bharat), Kaikeyi pretended to fill her eyes with crocodile-tears (as if she was very sad about what she was going to tell Bharat)¹.

When the wicked woman finally spoke, her words pierced Bharat's heart and mind (Mana) as if a sharp spear was driven through him. (Doha no. 159)

[Note—¹Kaikeyi filled her eyes with "crocodile tears" because it was just for show; she was merely pretending to be sad at the developments that she was about to narrate to her son. One would recognize how wicked and cunning Kaikeyi was if one recalls how delighted she had been just a while ago while receiving Bharat. This lady had no regrets or compunctions, nor did she show any trace of mercy or decency when her husband, king Dasrath, had pleaded with her by falling at her feet to spare him the punishment of being separated from Lord Ram, especially when the Lord had committed no mistake, and the king was ready to appoint Bharat to the throne. She has shown no remorse when the king lay wailing and lamenting on the ground as if a man had been stricken by a serious illness and was in the throes of death. Dasrath was Kaikeyi's husband, and with his death she became a widow. But she cared for nothing.

But now she fills her eyes with tears! It was because by Bharat's attitude she realized that what she was about to say would not be liked by him, and she feared for the worst if Bharat got the hint that she had thoroughly enjoyed the success of her horrific plan that had caused so much havoc on the family as well as on Ayodhya.

In a short while, we shall read how shocked and dismayed Bharat felt when he was told by her the craft she had played, so much so that he condemned her and scolded her in the sternest of terms, and he himself felt guilty as if he had committed a heinous crime.]

चौ०. तात बात मैं सकल सँवारी । भै मंथरा सहाय बिचारी ॥ १ ॥

कछुक काज बिधि बीच बिगारेउ । भूपति सुरपति पुर पगु धारेउ ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

tāta bāta mair̥ṁ sakala sam̐vārī. bhai mantharā sahāya bicārī. 1.
kachuka kāja bidhi bīca bigārē'u. bhūpati surapati pura pagu dhārē'u. 2.

Kaikeyi told Bharat: ‘My dear son (tāta)! I have accomplished success in implementing the plan I had devised for your sake, and in this endeavour of mine, the poor Manthara has been a great help to me¹. (1)

But unfortunately, the Creator had, in the meanwhile, acted a spoil-sport by causing a bit of a hindrance before the plan could be put into effect, as the king (i.e. Dasrath) has departed to Indra’s place (in the heavens).² (2)

[Note—¹Kaikeyi is very diplomatic and cunning in her opening remarks when she tried to win over Bharat’s goodwill and confidence by telling him that she has successfully implemented a long-term plan for his sake, for his own good. She mistakenly thought that Bharat was as selfish and crooked as she was, and when he learns that his mother has planned his ascension to the throne by deft maneuvering, he would be very glad and thankful to her. And to avoid Manthara being neglected from sharing the spoils of kingdom, she brought in her name to give the impression that this old hack was the only one who had been helpful to her.

Little did Kaikeyi realize that she had exploded a bomb that would wreck Bharat’s boat of peace and happiness. We shall read about it shortly.

²This is a polite and civil way of saying that someone has died. No one would say that the dying person has gone to ‘hell’, as it is extremely in-courteous, highly impolite and very un-civil to say such a derogatory thing for a dead person.

For Kaikeyi, the death of her husband was more or less inconsequential going by the way she has treated Dasrath’s death in a casual manner in the same way as an invading army treats civilian casualties of a peace loving nation as collateral damage of a war. From the perspective of this wicked woman, Dasrath was old enough to die, and it was a sort good riddance for her as she feared that if he survived he would prove to be a worse problem for Bharat as it was apparent to her that he did not prefer Bharat’s ascension over that of Lord Ram. Being the king of the kingdom, he still wielded sovereign powers, and there was still a possibility that he would order Bharat to be imprisoned as soon as he comes home. So, therefore, Kaikeyi was rather glad that Dasrath was out of the way. And with other claimant to the throne, i.e. Lord Ram, too out of the way (because by now he was far away in the forest), the decks were cleared for Kaikeyi to put Bharat on the throne and grab power of the kingdom.

Refer also to: Veda Vyas’ “Adhyatma Ramayan”, Ayodhya Kand, Canto 7, verse nos. 68-70.]

सुनत भरतु भए बिबस बिषादा । जनु सहमेउ करि केहरि नादा ॥ ३ ॥

तात तात हा तात पुकारी । परे भूमितल व्याकुल भारी ॥ ४ ॥

चलत न देखन पायउँ तोही । तात न रामहि सौँपेहु मोही ॥ ५ ॥

sunata bharatu bha'e bibasa biṣādā. janu sahamē'u kari kēhari nādā. 3.

tāta tāta hā tāta pukārī. parē bhūmitala byākula bhārī. 4.

calata na dēkhana pāya'um' tōhī. tāta na rāmahī saumpēhu mōhī. 5.

No sooner Bharat heard that his father has died, but he was overcome with excess of sorrows and grief as if a poor elephant has been terrified when it hears the roar of the lion¹. (3)

Repeatedly crying out ‘oh my dear father’, Bharat fell to the ground crestfallen and extremely distraught. (4)

‘Alas, it is so unfortunate that I could not see (meet) you at the time of thine departure to heaven. [To wit, oh my loving father, what wrong did I do and what misfortune I had that I could not be present by thy side at the time of thine death. Woe to me and my bad luck.]

Oh dear father (tāta), thou hast departed without putting me in the safe custody of Lord Ram (and making him my guardian)², (5)

[Note—¹Though the elephant has a much larger body than the lion, but it’s a paradox of Nature that the lion can still kill an elephant. So, as soon as an elephant hears the roar of a hungry lion, the poor creature is terrified out of its wits. For an elephant, there is no sound more alarming than the roar of the lion.

Likewise, this bit of news had shocked Bharat beyond belief. But wait, more was in store for him; a greater shock awaited him.

²This lamentation of Bharat clearly shows how much he respected and loved his elder brother, Lord Ram, for his only wish was that his father should have formally handed over his protection and safe custody to Lord Ram before his death. What was the need when Bharat knew, as well as everyone else, that the two brothers shared a very cordial and brotherly relationship with each other? {In this context, see: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 198; (b) Ayodhya Kand, (ii) Doha no. 205 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it (declaration by the deity of Prayag); (iii) Chaupai line nos. 3-6 that precede Doha no. 208 (sage Bharadwaj’s assertion); (iv) Doha no. 260 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it (Bharat’s own admission); (v) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 266 (proclamation by the guru of the gods).}

So, what was the necessity for Bharat lamenting that Dasrath died before formally putting him in the safe custody of Lord Ram? The answer lies in the practical and more mundane ways of the world. As long as the King is alive, the princes would usually share a cordial relationship with each other, but once he dies, and if he has not put into place a definitive succession plan, there are all the possibilities of a power struggle in the family, and in this scenario usually the urge to grab power supersedes all other considerations, with emotions and sentiments and personal relationships and family hierarchies and disciplines, as well as principles of probity and propriety and ethics and morality—all taking a back seat.

Then, once a prince ascends the throne, there are chances that he may treat his brothers as claimants to the throne, and harbour secret fear from them. Unless their brotherly bonds are extremely robust, and the brothers have abiding mutual trust and faith in each other, a slow but steady rift develops between them, and in due course of time some misunderstanding would crop up, mostly out of misinformation rather than from facts, and the brother who is the king would have no second thoughts in imprisoning or banishing his other brothers whom he suspects of planning against him, forgetting at that time that they had shared their meals, games and toys, their laughs and joys and plays together in their younger days.

This probability played in Bharat's mind when he lamented that his father Dasrath had not told his elder brother, Lord Ram, to take proper care of his younger brother Bharat and treat him with due love and dignity as he would treat his own son. We have a sterling example of this kind of thing happening—where a father hands over the safe custody of his son to Lord Ram before his death—in the story of the Ram Charit Manas itself. When the monkey king Baali was dying, he handed over the safe custody of his son Angad to Lord Ram, with a request to the Lord to treat Angad as his own. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chanda line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 10.}]

बहुरि धीर धरि उठे सँभारी । कहु पितु मरन हेतु महतारी ॥ ६ ॥
 सुनि सुत बचन कहति कैकेई । मरमु पाँछि जनु माहुर देई ॥ ७ ॥
 आदिहु तें सब आपनि करनी । कुटिल कठोर मुदित मन बरनी ॥ ८ ॥

bahuri dhīra dhari uṭhē sam̐bhārī. kahu pitu marana hētu mahatārī. 6.
 suni suta bacana kahati kaikē'ī. maramu pām̐chi janū māhura dē'ī. 7.
 ādiḥu tēm̐ saba āpani karani. kuṭila kaṭhōra mudita mana baranī. 8.

Bharat collected his wits together and got up slowly. He enquired from his mother: 'Oh mother, please tell me the cause of my father's death.'¹ (6)

Hearing these words of her son, Kaikeyi replied, but her words seemed to be akin to her applying a scorching substance to a wound that she has herself inflicted, and then in an attempt to clean and dress it, she opened the wound and applied a substance that would further erode the tissue of the affected part, thereby exacerbating the patient's suffering². (7)

The wicked and cunning woman narrated, with glee and delight in her heart, all that she had done from the very beginning, feeling proud and happy at her intelligence and wit that she could so skillfully craft such a devious method to achieve success in her objective³. (8)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Veda Vyas' "Adhyatma Ramayan", Ayodhya Kand, Canto 7, verse no. 71.

²In this analogy, the horrifying news of Dasrath's death was like the wound inflicted by Kaikeyi on Bharat. It was she who had been the cause of this wound, as Dasrath had died due to all the mischief she had created.

Now, when Bharat asked him why this wound was made, Kaikeyi would try to justify it by her answer that would try to explain why Dasrath died. This reasoning of hers was like trying to open the wound and dress it, but instead of using healing medicine, her answer scorched the wound and threw Bharat into a spasm of grief and unprecedented misery.

³Thinking that she has played her game to perfection, that Bharat would marvel at her intelligence, foresight and wit, she boasted of what she had done—outlining all the developments that culminated in Lord Ram going to the forest with Sita and Laxman, and the subsequent death of Dasrath.

She pretended to act like an expert surgeon, though he may be just a novice and a quack-doctor, who thinks that he has successfully operated on his patient to remove a cancerous tumor from his body. Then when the operation went wrong and the patient complained of some sort of pain, the so-called surgeon (i.e. the quack who had masqueraded as an expert doctor) reopened the festering wound in order to clean and apply some medicine before closing it again, in the hope that the patient would feel better. But unfortunately, the process went awry, for the wicked quack had unwittingly added salt to the wound instead of some healing remedy, which in turn sent the poor and hapless patient writhing in pain and gasping for breath.

Likewise, Kaikeyi thought that she has pulled off some excellent feat, but to her misfortune it had all gone wrong.]

दो०. भरतहि बिसरेउ पितु मरन सुनत राम बन गौनु ।
हेतु अपनपउ जानि जियँ थकित रहे धरि मौनु ॥ १६० ॥

dōhā.

bharatahi bisarē'u pitu marana sunata rāma bana gaunu.
hētu apanapa'u jāni jiyam̐ thakita rahē dhari maunu. 160.

No sooner Bharat heard of Lord Ram's exile to the forest, but he almost forgot about the grief associated with the death of Dasrath, for the latter event became but secondary to him.

Upon realizing that it was he who had been the cause of the Lord's banishment to the forest, Bharat was shocked and dazed beyond measure; he drew a deep breath and became silent in bewilderment¹. (Doha no. 160)

[Note—¹For a moment, Bharat knew not how to react; he was dumbfounded and stunned into immobility. His momentary silence was like a lull before a huge storm that lashes ashore to create havoc. This will be evident in the following verses when he would burst out like a pent-up volcano that spews hot lava all around. Bharat would scold, scorn, scoff, rebuke, condemn and pour vitriol on his wicked mother in the most contemptible way and language he could think of, but at the same time mindful of the dignity that behooves his stature as a prince of a great and cultured royal family. His brother Shatrughan would vent his ire more ruthlessly and go a step further when he grabbed the chief conspirator, the hunch-back maid Manthara, by her hair as he dragged and kicked her all around the courtyard.]

चौ०. बिकल बिलोकि सुतहि समुझावति । मनहुँ जरे पर लोनु लगावति ॥ १ ॥
तात राउ नहिं सोचै जोगू । बिढ़इ सुकृत जसु कीन्हैउ भोगू ॥ २ ॥
जीवत सकल जनम फल पाए । अंत अमरपति सदन सिधाए ॥ ३ ॥
अस अनुमानि सोच परिहरहू । सहित समाज राज पुर करहू ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

bikala bilōki sutahi samujhāvati. manahum̐ jarē para lōnu lagāvati. 1.
tāta rā'u nahim̐ sōcai jōgū. biṛha'i sukr̥ta jasu kīnhē'u bhōgū. 2.

jīvata sakala janama phala pā'ē. anta amarapati sadana sidhā'ē. 3.
asa anumāni sōca pariharahū. sahita samāja rāja pura karahū. 4.

When Kaikeyi saw that her son (Bharat) was inconsolable and lamenting grievously, she tried to comfort him, but her attempts had an opposite effect because it was like rubbing salt to a wound. (1)

Kaikeyi said to Bharat: 'My dear son (tāta). The king (your father Dasrath) is not to be regretted for, because he had done many good and great things in life, and had been meritorious in many ways that gave him good fortunes and name. He had enjoyed the fruits of his meritorious life when he was alive. (2)

During his lifetime, he had enjoyed the rewards of many previous meritorious lives, and at the time of death he attained heaven.¹ (3)

Keeping these facts in mind, you must stop grieving for him. Instead, you must accept the crown of the kingdom to become its king, and rule over its subjects². (4)

[Note—¹A similar praise for Dasrath will be made by sage Vasistha a little while later when the royal court assembles to ask Bharat to take over the reigns of the kingdom. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 172—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 174.}]

Later on, even sage Bharadwaj had praised Dasrath. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 209 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it.}

²Sage Vasistha too has given a similar advice to Bharat in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 174—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 175.

Even mother Kaushalya, the senior-most queen and the mother of Lord Ram, had the same advice for Bharat, as did all the courtiers and ministers of the kingdom. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 175—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 176.}

But, Bharat did not get angry at any of them as he would on Kaikeyi. Why? It is because it was Kaikeyi who was guilty of all the evil things that had happened in Ayodhya. So, as soon as Bharat heard these comforting words of his mother Kaikeyi, then instead of feeling somewhat comforted, his anger was stoked like oil had been put into a fire that was burning within his heart, for this fire would burst out into the open like lava spewing out from the crater of a volcano. To wit, he burst out with a vengeance on his mother, as we shall read in the following verses herein below.]

सुनि सुठि सहमेउ राजकुमारू । पाकें छत जनु लाग अँगारू ॥ ५ ॥

धीरज धरि भरि लेहिं उसासा । पापिनि सबहि भाँति कुल नासा ॥ ६ ॥

जौं पै कुरुचि रही अति तोही । जनमत काहे न मारे मोही ॥ ७ ॥

पेड़ काटि तैं पालउ सींचा । मीन जिअन निति बारि उलीचा ॥ ८ ॥

sunī suṭhi sahamē'u rājakumārū. pākēm chata janū lāga amḡārū. 5.
 dhīraja dhari bhari lēhim usāsā. pāpini sabahi bhāmṭi kula nāsā. 6.
 jaum pai kuruci rahī ati tōhī. janamata kāhē na mārē mōhī. 7.
 pēra kāṭi taim pāla'u sīncā. mīna ji'ana niti bāri ulīcā. 8.

When the prince (i.e. Bharat) heard these words of his mother, it was like his festering wound had been touched by a red hot piece of coal. (5)

He started breathing heavily as if trying to suppress his anger and grief while still trying to speak. When however he spoke dolefully, it was with utter contempt and disdain for her, which was evident in his voice and words.

‘Oh you sinful woman! Thou hast ruined the whole family in all imaginable way; you have brought an unprecedented grave calamity on all. (6)

If thy wicked heart had harboured such evil designs and malice, then say, why doth had thou not killed me whilst I was still in thy cursed womb; why doth thou brought my unfortunate self forth into this world? (7)

Woe to thine wicked self, for thou art like that stupid woodcutter who cuts down the tree and then waters its leaves; thou art indeed so foolish that thou hast drained the pond of all water and then try to keep its fish alive. (8)

दो०. हंसबंसु दसरथु जनकु राम लखन से भाइ ।
 जननी तूँ जननी भई बिधि सन कछु न बसाइ ॥१६१॥
 dōhā.

hansabansu dasarathu janaku rāma lakhana sē bhā'i.
 janani tūm janani bha'i bidhi sana kachu na basā'i. 161.

Look, how fortunate I was that I took birth in an illustrious and glorious family that is as renowned for its virtues and characters as the bird Swan is amongst the kingdom of birds, for I had the great king Dasrath as my honourable father, and Lord Ram and Laxman as my loving brothers.

But alas, oh mother, how unfortunate it is that thou hast been mine mother in the same family. Indeed, it is truly said of the Creator that his ways are unpredictable and whimsical, and that one has no control over what he does and how he shapes a person's destiny and fate¹.

[To wit, I am ashamed of myself that I am thine son, and thou art my mother. But what can I do with it, as the Creator had decided it to be so. In all sooth, if I had my say, I wouldst have preferred to die instead of being born to be called thy son. Fie to my ill fate, and woe to my bad luck, that I can't change this shameful epithet of being recognized as a son of Kaikeyi.] (Doha no. 161)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 49; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 119; (iii) Chanda line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 201; (iv) Chanda line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 276. In all these verses the uncertain and whimsical ways of the Creator, i.e. Brahama, have been regretted.]

चौ०. जब तैं कुमति कुमत जियँ ठयऊ । खंड खंड होइ हृदउ न गयऊ ॥ १ ॥

बर मागत मन भइ नहिं पीरा । गरि न जीह मुहँ परेउ न कीरा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

jaba taim kumati kumata jiyam̐ ṭhaya'ū. khaṇḍa khaṇḍa hō'i hr̥da'u na gaya'ū.

1.

bara māgata mana bha'i nahim̐ pīrā. gari na jīha muham̐ parē'u na kīrā. 2.

Strongly chiding his mother and treating her with utter contempt, Bharat vehemently admonished and upbraided her: 'From the very first moment when this evil thought occurred in your heart, so much time had elapsed, but why didn't your wicked heart broke down into pieces? (1)

Why did you have no pain, why did you not feel the pang of guilt at wrong doing at the time you had asked for the boons that have resulted in the havoc they have caused?

Why was your tongue not dissolved in your mouth as you spoke, and why didn't your cursed mouth get infested with poisonous worms and vermin at that time? (2)

भूपँ प्रतीति तोरि किमि कीन्ही । मरन काल बिधि मति हरि लीन्ही ॥ ३ ॥

बिधिहुँ न नारि हृदय गति जानी । सकल कपट अघ अवगुन खानी ॥ ४ ॥

सरल सुसील धरम रत राऊ । सो किमि जानै तीय सुभाऊ ॥ ५ ॥

bhūpam̐ pratīti tōri kimi kīnhī. marana kāla bidhi mati hari līnhī. 3.

bidhihum̐ na nāri hr̥daya gati jānī. sakala kapaṭa agha avaguna khānī. 4.

sarala susīla dharama rata rā'ū. sō kimi jānai tīya subhā'ū. 5.

It defies my understanding as to how and why the king could trust you before pledging to give his words of honour to you that your vile demands would be fulfilled. [Didn't he know, was he not aware of how wicked, scheming, deceitful, cunning, selfish, wild and pretentious you are? I wonder how he fell in this trap. He was a man of wisdom, a great king who was accustomed to such cunning ways of his enemies, as dealing with similar situations was a daily fare with him. How then did he allow himself to become a prey to a hunter like you? I can't come to terms with it.]

Perhaps the Creator knew that it was the time of the king's impending death, so therefore he decided to cloud Dasrath's wisdom and corrupt his mind to prevent the king from seeing through your crooked mechanism. (3)

Nay, it is wrong to blame the king for trusting you and reposing faith in your loyalty to him, because he was a human being who can be easily misled, for even the Creator is unable to sufficiently know the inclinations of a wicked woman's heart, which is nevertheless full of deceit, conceit, pretensions, and is a treasure trove of evil characters.

[To wit, even the Creator does not know the wicked ways a woman can adopt and how low she can stoop for her selfish ends. A woman can be so cunning that she would easily deceive the Creator. Hence, there is no wonder that you have been successful in cheating Dasrath who was merely a human being.]¹ (4)

The king (Dasrath) was of a courteous nature and had a heart that was simple and straightforward, for he knew no conceit, deceit or cunning as it was not in his nature to be so. He was a follower of Dharma, i.e. he always strove to uphold the path of righteousness, probity, propriety, ethics, morality, goodness, and nobility of thought and conduct. Given the fact that even the Creator is liable to be deceived by a woman, how can such a noble-hearted and straightforward man as Dasrath know the wicked nature of a woman? It is not expected of him. [That is why he had fallen a victim to your evil devices and vile mechanisms.] (5)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 47; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 48; (iii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 53.]

अस को जीव जंतु जग माहीं । जेहि रघुनाथ प्रानप्रिय नाहीं ॥ ६ ॥
 भे अति अहित रामु तेउ तोही । को तू अहसि सत्य कहु मोही ॥ ७ ॥
 जो हसि सो हसि मुहँ मसि लाई । आँखि ओट उठि बैठहि जाई ॥ ८ ॥

asa kō jīva jantu jaga māhīm. jēhi raghunātha prānapriya nāhīm. 6.
 bhē ati ahita rāmu tē'u tōhī. kō tū ahasi satya kahu mōhī. 7.
 jō hasi sō hasi muham' masi lāī. ām'khi ōṭa uṭhi baiṭhahi jāī. 8.

Verily, who amongst all living beings in this world is the one to whom Lord Ram is not dear? [To wit, Lord Ram is loved by all the creatures, without exception.] (6)

It is such an irony that the same Lord Ram was deemed to be harmful by you, that you regarded the Lord as being the cause of some danger or misfortune for you.

Come on, tell me honestly who art thou? [Art thou a demon in a human form? Likely it is so, for otherwise I just can't understand how you thought that Lord Ram could be of any harm to you, even in your wildest of dreams.] (7)

Well, nothing can be done now, as whatever happened has already happened. But prithee, smear thy ignominious face black and get out of my sight forthwith; scoot from here to go and sit somewhere else.' (8)

दो०. राम बिरोधी हृदय तें प्रगट कीन्ह बिधि मोहि ।
 मो समान को पातकी बादि कहउँ कछु तोहि ॥ १६२ ॥
 dōhā.

rāma birōdhī hṛdaya tēm pragata kīnha bidhi mōhi.
 mō samāna kō pātakī bādī kaha'um' kachu tōhi. 162.

Bharat was highly remorseful and lamented sorely: ‘The Vidhi (Creator, the author who writes a person’s fate and destiny) had been so antagonized with me that he made me take birth from someone whose heart was opposed to Lord Ram (a clear reference to his mother Kaikeyi).

Fie to me and woe to my luck. I curse myself for this fate of mine. Say, who is born a greater sinner than me, and who is more contemptible than myself (as I had been made an excuse for sending Lord Ram to the forest, and the subsequent death of my father Dasrath).

First let me be aware of the answer to this question, and then later on I shall say anything about you (Kaikeyi).

[To wit, let me blame myself that I did not die immediately upon birth, but I couldn’t help it as the Creator had so destined for me that I should bear the scar of ignominy of being Kaikeyi’s son for the rest of my accursed life. Let all condemnation come to me. Thou wert wicked from birth; wickedness was in your blood. Hence, it was my ill-fortune that I came to known as thy son. So, I must blame myself first and foremost.]’ (Doha no. 162)

[Note—Refer also to: (a) Geetawali Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, verse nos. 60-61; and (b) Veda Vyas’ “Adhyatma Ramayan”, Ayodhya Kand, Canto 7, verse nos. 79-81.

Even the citizens of Ayodhya had cursed Kaikeyi earlier almost in a similar way—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 47 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 51.

As we have by now seen, Bharat was totally innocent and non-involved in the mischief his mother Kaikeyi had carried out in his name. He was away visiting his maternal uncle’s place along with his younger brother Shatrughan at that time. When message was sent to him to rush back home to Ayodhya, and on coming back he discovered all what grief and misfortune had befallen upon the family and the kingdom due to the nuisance his mother had committed, he was sorely startled and extremely disconsolate. He wept bitterly and was filled with exceeding fury at his mother. His eyes glared as he waxed in wroth in exceeding wrath as he lamented most woefully and grieved at the crest of grieving even as he vented his ire on his mother, denouncing her, chiding and upbraiding her in the sternest possible words he could muster.

So therefore, no sooner Bharat learnt of the whole episode but he became furious and vented his ire on his wicked mother, if we take the liberty to express his anger in our own language, and upbraided and berated her as follows: “Alack-a-day, oh thou accursed woman! Fie upon thee! Oh thou yonder foolish woman, the selfish of the most selfish creature ever born, one who is one of the most lowly wallowing in the deepest trough of lowliness, tell me, how dare thou havest the courage to stand before me with a face blackened with deeds darker than the darkest lamp-black? Woe betide thee, thou the meanest, the wickedest and the vilest women that walketh on the surface of the earth. Dost not thee realize and ashamed at thy self that thine act hast broughtest upon mine family a tainted scourge likest of which none couldest have ever imagined? Wost dost thou not kill me whence thou had brought forth me into this world to face this ignominy? Shame to me that I be calleth thine son, and thou my mother. Woe to thy womb and woe to thy name. By the Creator, why shouldest thou, and how durst thou, have done what thou did? Why, thou have become the cause of bereavement at the death of mine father, banishment of mine dearest brother, the parcel of mine heart without whom I can’t live, and heapest thou upon me the lowliest

of ill-fame by the bucket-load, the ignominy of which I wilt ne'er tidedth-over till breath leaveth mine body! Woe to thee and thine name; woe to me and mine life! And let the Creator suffer me and castest upon me the greatest of sufferance by way of punishment that he hast written in his scroll of destiny. Now, in severance of all relations with thee, I command that thou wilt hasten away from my presence and scoot to the yonder at this instant and hide thine tarry face, thee and thine Gobbo companion (the hunch-back maid Manthara)—for verily, I raiseth mine hands and proclaimeth as a soothsayer would that I not henceforward be suffered to ever have an unfortunate chance to casteth mine eyes upon thine evil-omened form, and let the Creator honour mine this pledge ne'er e'er to see thy accursed face till death overtakes me. Fie upon thee and woe betide thee! Now, I ask of thee to spare me mine peace and leave me alone, and get away from my sight for good, for I am ashamed of mine unfortunate self that the Creator chose me to bear the agony and the ignominy of being called thine son. More than thee, woe to me that fate and providence made me thine hateful son!!”

These sentiments of Bharat are expressly narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 161—to Doha no. 162; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 164; and (iii) from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 167—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 168.

Further, Bharat's last vow not to see his mother's face till as long as he lived has been endorsed in Geetawali, Uttar Kand, verse no. 37 which is explicit on this issue.

It has also been recorded in all the versions of the Ramayana that Bharat had taken his mother to severest task, pouring scorn at her and severely rebuking her in the strongest possible terms. Bharat declared that he will surely not accept the crown because it belonged rightly to his dearest brother Ram, and that he would go to the forest to bring the Lord back. So he set forth with all his courtiers and met Lord Ram at Chitrakoot. Bharat tried his best to persuade Ram to return, even offering to replace him in the forest if the Lord thought that their father's words ought to be honoured. But Lord Ram explained things to him privately that it was necessary for him to remain in the forest because it was a part of the planning which would culminate in the elimination of the cruel demon race, the reason for which the Lord had come to earth in the first place. Some excuse had to be found so that Lord Ram could go to the forest to meet the sages and oblige them as well as to go to the den of the demons at Lanka to eliminate them, and the entire episode of Kaikeyi invoking her due promises from Dasrath and sending Ram to the forest was merely a ploy to implement the larger plan.]

चौ०. सुनि सत्रुघुन मातु कुटिलाई । जरहिं गात रिस कछु न बसाई ॥ १ ॥

तेहि अवसर कुबरी तहँ आई । बसन बिभूषन बिबिध बनाई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sunī satrugḥuna mātu kuṭilāī. jarahim gāta risa kachu na basāī. 1.
tēhi avasara kubarī taham āī. basana bibhūṣana bibidha banāī. 2.

No sooner Shatrughan heard of the wickedness and the evil things that the mother had done, but he became so furious that his body was literally afire, and he was finding it difficult to contain his anger and repugnance. (1)

At that time the hunch-back maid (i.e. Manthara) came in, bringing with her different kinds of royal robes and ornaments of various sorts which are usually worn by a prince who is to be made a king very soon¹. (2)

[Note—¹This crooked, sly and vile hack of a hunch-back, who was the chief conspirator, and the one who had stoked jealousy and malice in the heart of Kaikeyi in the first place by cooking up wild and imaginary scenes of fear and insubordination once Lord Ram ascended the throne to ensure her son Bharat was sidelined, had on an earlier occasion collected all the necessary accoutrements, such as clothes and wooden sandals used by hermits, so that when the right moment came, these things would be placed before Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman by Kaikeyi on a clue from her, to be donned by them before their departure for the forest. In this context, the reader should refer to Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 79 along with a detailed note appended to it.

She tried the same thing here too, in the hope that Bharat and Shatrughan would be mighty pleased with her as being of great help to their mother Kaikeyi in meticulously planning a perfect coup which enabled them to grab the crown of a mighty kingdom without any sort of resistance or bloodshed, and at the same time eliminating all chances of obstacles to Bharat's ascension by banishing the only other claimant to the throne, i.e. Lord Ram, out of sight. Death of Dasrath was merely a sort of side-effect of that medicine, a sort of collateral damage which had to be neglected in order to give effect to a major change in the present setup in the society.

But to Manthara's utter dismay, she found out that she would be treated as the main villain of the nasty plot, like a pariah, a culprit who was caught red-handed and condemned to be summarily punished for her temerity to play foul with Lord Ram, causing immense infamy to the otherwise honourable family of king Dasrath, and bringing misery and grief to the whole of Ayodhya. This will be evident in the next set of verses that follow herein below.]

लखि रिस भरेउ लखन लघु भाई । बरत अनल घृत आहुति पाई ॥ ३ ॥
 हुमगि लात तकि कूबर मारा । परि मुह भर महि करत पुकारा ॥ ४ ॥
 कूबर टूटेउ फूट कपारू । दलित दसन मुख रुधिर प्रचारू ॥ ५ ॥

lakhi risa bharē'u lakhana laghu bhā'ī. barata anala ghr̥ta āhuti pā'ī. 3.
 humagi lāta taki kūbara mārā. pari muha bhara mahi karata pukārā. 4.
 kūbara ṭūṭē'u phūṭa kapārū. dalita dasana mukha rudhira pracārū. 5.

Seeing her (Manthara), the already burning fire of anger and repugnance of the younger brother of Laxman (i.e. Shatrughan) suddenly erupted into leaping flames as if oil has been poured over that fire¹. (3)

He lunged forward viciously at her, and aiming straight at her crooked back, he gave her a mighty kick, at which she rolled over and fell with face down, shrieking in pain. (4)

Her crooked back cracked, and so was her skull. Her teeth broke, and blood flowed out abundantly from her mouth as well as the head. (5)

[Note—¹Shatrughan was already seething with anger at Manthara, but when he saw her coming with ornaments and royal robes, with her face betraying her satisfaction and happiness at what she had done, hoping that she would be well received by Bharat, Shatrughan could no longer restrain himself. Her sight made his wrath and vengeance on her burst out into the open in a similar way as flames would leap up from a smouldering fire when oil is poured over it.]

आह दइअ मैं काह नसावा । करत नीक फलु अनइस पावा ॥ ६ ॥
 सुनि रिपुहन लखि नख सिख खोटी । लगे घसीटन धरि धरि झोंटी ॥ ७ ॥
 भरत दयानिधि दीन्हि छड़ाई । कौसल्या पहिं गे दोउ भाई ॥ ८ ॥

āha da'i'a mair̥m kāha nasāvā. karata nīka phalu ana'isa pāvā. 6.
 suni ripuhana lakhi nakha sikha khōṭī. lagē ghasīṭana dhari dhari jhōṇṭī. 7.
 bharata dayānidhi dīnhi charā'ī. kausalyā pahim̐ gē dō'u bhā'ī. 8.

Writhing in pain, Manthara wailed: 'Oh goodness gracious, what wrong did I do that while trying to do good for others and protecting their interest, I am punished so rudely and unjustifiably?' (6)

Manthara's agonized plea further stoked Shatrughan's wrath on her, for he concluded that she was exceptionally wicked and vile¹. So, he caught hold of the plaits of her hairs, and started dragging her all around the palace courtyard (as she wailed and shrieked madly like a puppy at the receiving end of its master's anger for some inexcusable mischief it has committed). (7)

At this juncture, the merciful Bharat intervened, and out of his grace he freed her from the grip of his younger brother, thereby preventing her from being tormented any further.

Then, the two brothers went to meet mother Kaushalya. (8)

[Note—¹In the initial stages, even Kaikeyi had been skeptical of Manthara—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 14.]

दो०. मलिन बसन बिबरन बिकल कृस सरीर दुख भार ।
 कनक कलप बर बेलि बन मानहुँ हनी तुसार ॥ १६३ ॥
 dōhā.

malina basana bibarana bikala kṛṣa sarīra dukha bhāra.
 kanaka kalapa bara bēli bana mānahum̐ hanī tusāra. 163.

[This verse describes the general condition in which Bharat found Kaushalya.]

Kaushalya's clothes were unkempt; her countenance and general condition were very distraught and gloomy; her body was emaciated; and she was suffering from a lot of grief and sorrows.

She gave the impression of a creeper, which during its prime days had a healthy golden hue, but is reduced to a miserable length of fiber as it shriveled and dried up when struck by frost during harsh winter¹. (Doha no. 163)

[Note—¹Previously, Kaushalya had a healthy body, but when grief struck her, first of her son Lord Ram going to the forest, and then her husband Dasrath dying, she became so distressed that her body seemed to have been ridden by some grave disease that led to her being emaciated. She lost all interest in the affairs of life. She was so overcome with grief and shocked that she cared not to take a bath, change her clothes, or even eat properly. She would spend her days sitting broodingly, dazed and numb, often muttering incoherently to herself, or looking blankly into the horizon.

It was in this gloomy, hopeless, distraught and disheveled condition that Bharat found Kaushalya.]

चौ०. भरतहि देखि मातु उठि धाई । मुरुछित अवनि परी झड़ि आई ॥ १ ॥

देखत भरतु बिकल भए भारी । परे चरन तन दसा बिसारी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

bharatahi dēkhi mātu uṭhi dhāī. muruchita avani parī jha'im' āī. 1.
dēkhata bharatu bikala bha'e bhārī. parē carana tana dasā bisārī. 2.

No sooner the mother (Kaushalya) saw Bharat, but she got up immediately and ran forward to meet him. But she became dizzy, swooned, and fell down on the ground midway¹. (1)

When Bharat saw her pitiful condition and how she fainted and collapsed, he was aghast and deeply moved. He became very emotional himself even as he fell down at her feet, forgetting about the condition of his own body. (2)

[Note—¹In Doha no. 163 that precedes this verse, we have already read how weak and emaciated Kaushalya had become. She did not expect Bharat to come to meet her, so when she saw him she could clearly perceive from his expressions that he was extremely sad, remorseful, distraught and repentant. It was a clear hint to her that he was extremely shocked at the developments and disapproved of what his mother Kaikeyi had done, and that he was coming to her to ask for forgiveness.

So, Kaushalya got up to receive Bharat with love and warmth, but weakness got the better of her as she fainted and fell down before she could reach him.]

मातु तात कहँ देहि देखाई । कहँ सिय रामु लखनु दोउ भाई ॥ ३ ॥

कैकड़ कत जनमी जग माझा । जौं जनमि त भइ काहे न बाँझा ॥ ४ ॥

कुल कलंकु जेहिं जनमेउ मोही । अपजस भाजन प्रियजन द्रोही ॥ ५ ॥

mātu tāta kaham' dēhi dēkhāī. kaham' siya rāmu lakhanu dō'u bhāī. 3.
kaika'i kata janamī jaga mājhā. jām janami ta bha'i kāhē na bām'jhā. 4.
kula kalaṅku jēhiṁ janamē'u mōhī. apajasa bhājana priyajana drōhī. 5.

Bharat was intensely sad and remorseful as he said to Kaushalya¹: ‘Oh my mother, please show me (i.e. tell me) where my dear father is (mātu tāta kaham̐); prithee tell me, where is Sita and my two dear brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman. (3)

Say, why did Kaikeyi take birth in this world, and if she did, why didn’t she became barren? (4)

Say, why did she instead bore me as her unfortunate son, one who would become a curse and a blot on his own family, one who would be honoured by nothing else but ignominy and shame, one who would have a reputation of being opposed to his own kith and kin, one who would be an enemy of those who loved him? (5)

[Note—¹The emotionally charged and poignant meeting between Bharat and Kaushalya, the way Bharat regretted and how Kaushalya comforted him, has been described in almost a similar way in: (a) Geetawali Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, verse nos. 62-63; and (b) Veda Vyas’ “Adhyatma Ramayan”, Ayodhya Kand, Canto 7, verse nos. 82-91.]

को तिभुवन मोहि सरिस अभागी । गति असि तोरि मातु जेहि लागी ॥ ६ ॥
 पितु सुरपुर बन रघुबर केतू । मैं केवल सब अनरथ हेतू ॥ ७ ॥
 धिग मोहि भयउँ बेनु बन आगी । दुसह दाह दुख दूषन भागी ॥ ८ ॥

kō tibhuvana mōhi sarisa abhāgī. gati asi tōri mātu jēhi lāgī. 6.
 pitu surapura bana raghubara kētū. maim kēvala saba anaratha hētū. 7.
 dhiga mōhi bhaya'um̐ bēnu bana āgī. dusaha dāha dukha dūṣana bhāgī. 8.

Say, who is more unfortunate and cursed in all the three divisions of the world (tibhuvana) than me who hast become the cause of so much misery and grief to his mother? (6)

Alas, I havest become instrumental in my father going to the abode of gods in heaven (die), and I havest become the cause of Lord Ram (“raghubara”; the most exalted of the Raghus) going to the forest.

Alack-a-day, it is me who hast become the only source of all the unprecedented misfortunes and immeasurable miseries that hast cast a pall of gloom for one and all. (7)

Shame upon my accursed self, woe to me and my ill fortunes that I havest been born to become a wildfire that destroys a grove of bamboo trees, and hast been the cause of all-round misery, grief and sorrows for all.¹ (8)

[Note—¹Bharat’s remorse and a repentant state of mind is evident in these outbursts of regret. He is full of contempt for himself, and condemns himself for being the cause of so much misery and grief that has engulfed everyone in Ayodhya, just like a single source of fire lit in a large grove of bamboo trees would spread quickly to destroy the whole area.]

दो०. मातु भरत के बचन मृदु सुनि पुनि उठी सँभारि ।
लिए उठाइ लगाइ उर लोचन मोचति बारि ॥ १६४ ॥

dōhā.

mātu bharata kē bacana mṛdu suni puni uṭhī sambhāri.
li'ē uṭhā'i lagā'i ura lōcana mōcati bāri. 164.

When mother Kaushalya heard these words of repentance and regret spoken by Bharat in a polite manner, she collected herself and got up¹.

She picked up Bharat and affectionately clasped him to her bosom even as tears gushed out of her eyes (in a stream that drenched him). (Doha no. 164)

[Note—¹We have read a short while ago that Kaushalya had fainted and collapsed on the ground. When she heard the plaintive words of Bharat, she however recovered herself, got up, and affectionately embraced him.]

चौ०. सरल सुभाय मायँ हियँ लाए । अति हित मनहुँ राम फिरि आए ॥ १ ॥
भेंटै बहुरि लखन लघु भाई । सोकु सनेहु न हृदयँ समाई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sarala subhāya māyam'hiyam'lā'ē. ati hita manahum'rāma phiri ā'ē. 1.
bhēṭē'u bahuri lakhana laghu bhāī. sōku sanēhu na hrdayam'samāī. 2.

Mother Kaushalya had a very simple and unpretentious heart. Hearing the pitiful words of Bharat, and perceiving that he is overcome with regret and remorse at the unfortunate developments that were caused in his name, she affectionately embraced him as if Lord Ram has come back himself¹. (1)

Then she affectionately met Bharat's younger brother (Shatrughan). The sadness and grief of those poignant moments were so profound that their hearts could not contain these emotions (i.e. both Kaushalya and Shatrughan were overwhelmed with sadness and grief). [To wit, both of them sobbed inconsolably, and comforted each other.] (2)

[Note—¹To wit, when Kaushalya observed that Bharat was innocent in his heart, and he himself was in a state of shock when he learnt of what has happened without his knowledge, but for which he has been held guilty, a natural sense of motherly compassion and sympathy sprouted in her heart for Bharat as she realized that he was the greater sufferer of them all for he has been accused of a serious crime that he has not committed, nor was a party to any fraction of it, directly or indirectly.]

देखि सुभाउ कहत सबु कोई । राम मातु अस काहे न होई ॥ ३ ॥
माताँ भरतु गोद बैठारे । आँसु पोंछि मृदु बचन उचारे ॥ ४ ॥

dēkhi subhā'u kahata sabu kō'ī. rāma mātu asa kāhē na hō'ī. 3.
mātām̐ bharatu gōda baiṭhārē. ām̐su pōn̐chi mṛdu bacana ucārē. 4.

Those who had witnessed this meeting (between Kaushalya, Bharat and Shatrughan) were unanimous in their praise for her, saying that there is no other mother anywhere in this world like the mother of Lord Ram (Kaushalya) is¹. (3)

The mother made Bharat sit on her lap (i.e. near her, very close to her), and while wiping the tears from his eyes, she spoke to him with a sweet and affectionate voice. (4)

[Note—¹Indeed it is true, for inspite of knowing that Bharat had been the cause for which her own son Lord Ram had been banished to the forest, she received Bharat with the same love as she would have received Lord Ram. She showed no trace of anger, malice or hatred towards Bharat, but rather hinted to him that she loved him as much as she loved Lord Ram. It is extraordinary, for ordinarily if there was some other mother in place of Kaushalya, she would have found it very difficult to show love for someone who has been the cause of so much misery to her own son, to everyone else in the family, as well as being instrumental in making the head of the family, i.e. the father, die.

So therefore, Kaushalya was praised by everyone for her noble and generous heart, her forgiving and compassionate nature, her broad outlook, her sense of equanimity, forbearance and fortitude.]

अजहुँ बच्छ बलि धीरज धरहू । कुसमउ समुझि सोक परिहरहू ॥ ५ ॥
जनि मानहु हियँ हानि गलानी । काल करम गति अघटित जानी ॥ ६ ॥

ajahum̐ baccha bali dhīraja dharahū. kusama'u samujhi sōka pariharahū. 5.
jani mānahu hiyaṁ̐ hāni galānī. kāla karama gati aghaṭita jānī. 6.

Kaushalya comforted Bharat: 'My dear son (baccha)! I request you to have courage and compose yourself. Keeping in mind that the time is not in our favour, it will be wiser for you to discard grieving and lamenting for things or situations over which you have no control. (5)

Do not harbour regret or remorse, nor feel guilty or loss by keeping in mind that Kaal and Karma (the effects of time and consequences of one's deeds) favour none, and their effects are unavoidable and inscrutable.¹ (6)

[Note—¹Earlier, Sumantra, the chief minister, had also tried to comfort king Dasrath in the same way, using almost the same sort of soothing words—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 150.

As for the effects of time and consequences of one's deeds, refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 219; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 282.]

काहुहि दोसु देहु जनि ताता । भा मोहि सब बिधि बाम बिधाता ॥ ७ ॥
जो एतेहुँ दुख मोहि जिआवा । अजहुँ को जानइ का तेहि भावा ॥ ८ ॥

kāhuhi dōsu dēhu jani tātā. bhā mōhi saba bidhi bāma bidhātā. 7.
jō ētēhum̐ dukha mōhi ji'āvā. ajahum̐ kō jāna'i kā tēhi bhāvā. 8.

My dear (tātā), there is no sense in accusing anyone else for the misfortunes that have descended upon us, for the Creator has been completely opposed to me, and he has done everything possible that would bring pain, agony and grief upon me¹. (7)

Not only this, inspite of all the sufferings that I have had to bear, he (the Creator) has compelled me to live (i.e. he did not let me die like my husband, king Dasrath), and no one can be sure what more he wants from me, what worse fate he has planned for me². (8)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Geetawali Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, verse no. 63.

²Kaushalya means that it would have been better if she had died alongside her husband, as it would have meant an end to all the sufferings that she is forced to endure, with no end in sight. Death at least would have given her soul peace and rest, instead of being tormented interminably by being forced to live a life full of grief and agony.]

दो०. पितु आयस भूषन बसन तात तजे रघुबीर ।
बिसमउ हरषु न हृदयँ कछु पहिरे बलकल चीर ॥ १६५ ॥
dōhā.

pitu āyasa bhūṣana basana tāta tajē raghubīra.
bisama'u haraṣu na hr̥dayam̐ kachu pahirē balakala cīra. 165.

[After giving expression to her sadness and grief as narrated in the previous verses, Kaushalya now briefs Bharat about what happened at the time Lord Ram when prepared to leave for the forest.]

Kaushalya continued: 'On the instructions of his father, Ram had discarded all his royal clothes and ornaments, and instead he put on the habit of a hermit which consisted of clothes made from the bark of a birch tree, showing neither sorrows and anger, nor any pleasure while donning this attire.

[To wit, Lord Ram maintained calm and dispassion when he was asked to shed his princely clothes and wear the clothes of a hermit. He did not exhibit any emotions, such as anger, sorrow, grief or revolt. He calmly put on the clothes of a hermit with as much calmness of mind and peace of heart as if he had been asked to change old clothes and put on new ones. For him, the habit of a hermit was as comfortable and likeable as the royal robe of a prince.]¹ (Doha no. 165)

[Note—¹If we look at this incident closely, it was not Dasrath, but Kaikeyi who had asked Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman to doff their royal attire and replace it with that of

a hermit—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 79.

In fact, this heartless demand of Kaikeyi had pierced the heart of Dasrath is an arrow had struck him. So therefore, to say that ‘Dasrath had ordered Lord Ram to shed his princely clothes and put on those of a hermit’ is not the truth.

So then, why did Kaushalya tell Bharat that it was on the orders of his father that the Lord took off his original clothes of a prince and put on the attire of a hermit? Well, the answer is this: At the time this was happening, only Kaikeyi was present there. When the news spread that Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman had been made to wear hermit like attires, it was natural that everyone suspected that it was done on the orders of Dasrath in the same way as the helpless king was accused for sending them to the forest in the first place, though everyone by this time had known that the real culprit is Kaikeyi and not Dasrath. The reason why the blame was cast on Dasrath’s shoulder is that he was the supreme authority to take a final call on anything that happened, in not only the kingdom but even inside the royal household as well. If he had sincerely desired, he could have exercised his veto powers to deny Kaikeyi what she had wanted. After all, all responsibility of whatever happened within his domain was obviously his and his alone, and he could not find lame excuses to exonerate himself from any serious consequences of any development if it went awry by saying that he could not help it happen, or that he was not a party to it. The king is the sovereign authority in his kingdom, and he cannot shirk off his responsibilities or absolve himself of any wrong-doing should anything evil happen while he is still the king and things are done while he is charge.

It is like the case of someone who allows music to be played, for then it would be deemed that he has also allowed song to be sung.

This is exactly what Kaushalya meant—that had Dasrath so wanted, he could have stepped in, in a decisive way, to prevent Lord Ram from going to the forest, but by allowing the Lord to proceed to the forest, and letting the Lord doff his royal clothes and don those of a hermit, it was clear that Dasrath had no objection to it happening, which in turn meant that he had given his tacit approval for it.]

चौ०. मुख प्रसन्न मन रंग न रोषू । सब कर सब बिधि करि परितोषू ॥ १ ॥

चले बिपिन सुनि सिय संग लागी । रहइ न राम चरन अनुरागी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

mukha prasanna mana raṅga na rōṣū. saba kara saba bidhi kari paritōṣū. 1.
calē bipina suni siya saṁga lāgī. raha'i na rāma carana anurāgī. 2.

Kaushalya continued with her narration of the events that took place during the moments preceding Lord Ram’s departure to the forest.

She said: ‘His (Lord Ram’s) face was cheerful, and his calm countenance and composed behaviour reflected the condition of his heart that had no trace of anger or any kind of emotions that would have naturally betrayed him by a change in the colour of his face¹.

He comforted and reassured everyone in every possible way². (1)

[Note—¹A person’s thoughts and emotions are reflected directly in his face, for the face is said to be a mirror of what goes on in one’s mind and heart. Lord Ram’s face

was calm, composed and cheerful as always, thereby meaning that his heart was at ease and the Lord was not annoyed or angry at being so unceremoniously disinherited and ordered into exile. He neither became red with anger, nor pale at this misfortune. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 41; (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 219.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 80—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 81; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 85.

Lord Ram told everyone to have patience and bear with him. He told them to be rest assured that he will surely come back to them at the end of fourteen years, that one must have courage and resilience during adversities, that everything will be okay when the bad time is over, that there is no use in fretting and fuming over ill fate as it will only give pleasure to the malicious deity of fate, and help no one in no way, that times are never the same always, that at the end of the darkness of the night there is the light of the dawn.]

सुनतहिं लखनु चले उठि साथा । रहहिं न जतन किए रघुनाथा ॥ ३ ॥
तब रघुपति सबही सिरु नाई । चले संग सिय अरु लघु भाई ॥ ४ ॥

sunatahiṁ lakhanu calē uṭhi sāthā. rahahiṁ na jatana ki'ē raghunāthā. 3.
taba raghupati sabahī siru nā'ī. calē saṅga siya aru laghu bhā'ī. 4.

No sooner Laxman heard that Lord Ram is going to the forest, but he immediately got up to accompany the Lord.

Raghunath (“raghunāthā”; the Lord of the family of king Raghu; i.e. Lord Ram) tried to prevail upon Laxman to stay at home, but the latter won't comply¹. (3)

After that, Lord Ram bowed his head before everyone, and accompanied by Sita and his younger brother (Laxman) he departed (for the forest)². (4)

[Note—¹Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 70—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 73.

²Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 79 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 81.]

रामु लखनु सिय बनहि सिधाए । गइउँ न संग न प्रान पठाए ॥ ५ ॥
यहु सबु भा इन्ह आँखिन्ह आगें । तउ न तजा तनु जीव अभागें ॥ ६ ॥

rāmu lakhanu siya banahi sidhā'ē. ga'i'um' na saṅga na prāna paṭhā'ē. 5.
yahu sabu bhā inha ām'khin'ha āgēm. ta'u na tajā tanu jīva abhāgēm. 6.

Lord Ram, Laxman and Sita went to the forest, and how unfortunate I am that I neither went with them nor did I send my Pran (my life) after them (i.e. I did not die)¹. (5)

All these developments happened right before my eyes, but inspite of it my life forces (i.e. my soul) did not leave this unfortunate and accursed body (and I continued to live to suffer, instead of dying and finding peace for myself). (6)

[Note—¹The mental upheaval of Kaushalya and the dilemma she faced has been narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 54—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 57.]

मोहि न लाज निज नेहु निहारी । राम सरिस सुत मैं महतारी ॥ ७ ॥
जिए मरै भल भूपति जाना । मोर हृदय सत कुलिस समाना ॥ ८ ॥

mōhi na lāja nija nēhu nihārī. rāma sarisa suta mair̥ mahatārī. 7.
ji'ai marai bhala bhūpati jānā. mōra hr̥daya sata kulisa samānā. 8.

Alas, it is such an irony of fate that I have no shame when I perceive the sort of (false) love that I profess to have for Lord Ram. I should be ashamed of myself that I am the mother of a son as glorious, loving, obedient and virtuous as Lord Ram, for, woe to me, I am not at all worthy to be called his mother. (7)

In comparison, the king is worthy of honour as he recognized the true value of love and affection, and what it means to a person who really loves someone else, for as long as he lived he dearly loved Lord Ram, and he died in grief out of his love for the Lord when the latter was separated from him.

But ah, my heart is as hard as a stone that I could not emulate the example of the king¹. (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 155 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that follow it.

Kaushalya regrets that she did not die out of grief in the same way as king Dasrath had died when separated from Lord Ram. Both of them had declared that they loved the Lord, but Dasrath stood the test and passed with flying colours by sacrificing his life at the alter of love, while Kaushalya failed because her soul preferred to cling to life instead of abandoning the body.

In this context, refer also to: Geetawali Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, verse nos. 84-85.]

दो०. कौसल्या के बचन सुनि भरत सहित रनिवासु ।
ब्याकुल बिलपत राजगृह मानहुँ सोक नेवासु ॥ १६६ ॥
dōhā.

kausalyā kē bacana suni bharata sahita ranivāsu.
byākula bilapata rājagṛha mānahum̐ sōka nēvāsu. 166.

Hearing these poignant and grief-stricken words of Kaushalya, Bharat and everyone else in the royal household lamented woefully and felt extremely sad, as if the palace was an abode of sorrows and mourning. (Doha no. 166)

चौ०. बिलपहिं बिकल भरत दोउ भाई । कौसल्याँ लिए हृदयँ लगाई ॥ १ ॥
 भाँति अनेक भरतु समुझाए । कहि बिबेकमय बचन सुनाए ॥ २ ॥
 भरतहुँ मातु सकल समुझाई । कहि पुरान श्रुति कथा सुहाई ॥ ३ ॥
 caupāī.

bilapahim bikala bharata dō'u bhāī. kausalyām' li'ē hṛdayam' lagāī. 1.
 bhām̐ti anēka bharatu samujhā'ē. kahi bibēkamaya bacana sunā'ē. 2.
 bharatahum' mātu sakala samujhā'īm. kahi purāna śruti kathā suhā'īm. 3.

When mother Kaushalya saw that the two brothers (Bharat and Shatrughan) were wailing and grieving sorely, she clasped both of them to her bosom (to comfort them). (1)

She comforted Bharat in many ways by speaking words of wisdom to help him overcome his profound sense of sorrow, remorse and guilt¹. (2)

On his part, Bharat too comforted his mothers (Kaushalya and Sumitra) by citing episodes from the Vedas and the Purans to encourage them to be calm, resilient and patient in the face of adversities and bad times². (3)

[Note—¹In this context, refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precede Doha no. 165; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 176.

²Bharat cited examples from ancient scriptures to emphasize that even the greatest of persons who lived in this world had faced some or the other kind of bad times in their lives, and how they had calmly and resolutely overcame adversities to emerge victorious, stronger and happier.

This method was employed by wise persons to comfort others who were in distress and emotional turmoil. We have read earlier that in Chitrakoot, Lord Ram had employed the same method to comfort Sita and Laxman whenever the Lord observed they were sad and despondent, to help divert their minds and keep them happy and contented in the forest—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 141. This also helped Lord Ram to divert his attention and remove his sorrows whenever he remembered his loving subjects and family back in Ayodhya.]

छल बिहीन सुचि सरल सुबानी । बोले भरत जोरि जुग पानी ॥ ४ ॥
 जे अघ मातु पिता सुत मारें । गाड़ गोठ महिसुर पुर जारें ॥ ५ ॥
 जे अघ तिय बालक बध कीन्हें । मीत महीपति माहुर दीन्हें ॥ ६ ॥
 जे पातक उपपातक अहहीं । करम बचन मन भव कबि कहहीं ॥ ७ ॥

ते पातक मोहि होहुँ बिधाता । जौं यहु होइ मोर मत माता ॥ ८ ॥

chala bihīna suci sarala subānī. bōlē bharata jōri juga pānī. 4.
jē agha mātu pitā suta mārēm. gā'i gōṭha mahisura pura jārēm. 5.
jē agha tiya bālaka badha kīnhēm. mīta mahīpati māhura dīnhēm. 6.
jē pātaka upapātaka ahahīm. karama bacana mana bhava kabi kahahīm. 7.
tē pātaka mōhi hōhum' bidhātā. jaum' yahu hō'i mōra mata mātā. 8.

Then, Bharat brought his hands together and joined his palms to address everyone present on the occasion in a prayerful manner, speaking in a most humble, sincere and pleasant way as follows— (4)

[In these verses, Bharat expresses his sadness and sense of guilt and remorse at what had happened in his absence, to tell everyone that he is not a part of this evil plot, and that he is ready to submit himself to any punishment that is deemed fit for the misfortunes, grief and miseries that had befallen on everybody, and had been done in his name even though he is not involved in it in the least.]

Bharat submitted: 'That horrific and unpardonable sin which is committed by a person who kills his parents and sons, who burns cowsheds and homes of Brahmins, --- (5)

--- That sin which is committed by killing a woman and a child, or poisoning a friend and the king of the realm (treason, betrayal), --- (6)

--- Nay, not only these but all other sins, small or great, that one may commit by his thoughts, deeds and words, of whatever kind as enumerated by wise persons¹, --- (7)

--- Oh mother, let the Creator stand witness for me that if I am in the least involved or had connived in any way whatsoever in the conspiracy hatched by my ill-fated mother that led to the present situation, then let the combined punishment of all the above sins be given to me by the Creator himself.' (8)

[Note—¹Lord Ram had listed three steps in committing a sin in Valmiki Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, Canto 109, verse no. 21, viz. "A person first thinks of doing something that is sinful, i.e. unrighteous, unscrupulous, improper, unethical, immoral and against norms of probity and propriety, i.e. that which violates the principles of Dharma; the second component of the sin is when he speaks about it, discusses it, argues and justifies it; and the third component of the sin is when he finally employs his body to actually do it."]

दो०. जे परिहरि हरि हर चरन भजहिं भूतगन घोर ।
तेहि कइ गति मोहि देउ बिधि जौं जननी मत मोर ॥ १६७ ॥
dōhā.

jē parihari hari hara carana bhajahīm bhūtagana ghōra.
tēhi ka'i gati mōhi dē'u bidhi jaum' janani mata mōra. 167.

Bharat continued to express his remorse and regret: ‘Oh mother, let the Creator give me— if he would pay heed to my pleas and listen to my earnest requests— to give me the ill destiny of a person who abandons the righteous path of having devotion for Lord Hari (Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being; a spiritually purifying and elevating path that leads to beatitude and peace), and instead follows the horrifying and sinful path of worshipping ghosts, evil spirits and phantoms. Let me be doomed and condemned in the same way.’¹ (Doha no. 167)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 8-9 that precede Doha no. 112.]

चौ०. बेचहिं बेदु धरमु दुहि लेहीं । पिसुन पराय पाप कहि देहीं ॥ १ ॥
 कपटी कुटिल कलहप्रिय क्रोधी । बेद बिदूषक बिस्व बिरोधी ॥ २ ॥
 लोभी लंपट लोलुपचारा । जे ताकहिं परधनु परदारा ॥ ३ ॥
 पावों मैं तिन्ह कै गति घोरा । जौं जननी यहु संमत मोरा ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

bēcahiṃ bēdu dharamu duhi lēhīṃ. pisuna parāya pāpa kahi dēhīṃ. 1.
 kapaṭī kuṭila kalahapriya krōdhī. bēda bidūṣaka bisva birōdhī. 2.
 lōbhī lampaṭa lōlupacārā. jē tākahiṃ paradhanu paradārā. 3.
 pāvaum̐ maim̐ tinha kai gati ghōrā. jaum̐ janani yahu sammata mōrā. 4.

[Citing other grave sins for which a person is punished, in the following verses Bharat says that if he is at all guilty of being a party of the unfortunate developments that have happened in Ayodhya during his absence, then he is ready to face punishment that may be equivalent to the punishment for one or a combination of all the sins listed herein.]

Bharat said further: ‘Those who sell the Vedas (i.e. those who monetize the scriptures, and exploit their piety and holiness to suit their own selfish purpose), those who milk Dharma (i.e. exploit it for their vested interests), those who are backbiters and tattlers (i.e. those who betray trust reposed in them; those who reveal secrets and betray others), those who speak of sins done by others (i.e. those who first corrupt their own mind by letting it think of sins of others, and then they spread ideas of nasty things by speaking of such deeds done by some one else so that even those who could not ever think or imagine of such nasty things become aware of it, and begin to think that such a thing can be actually be done)¹, --- (1)

--- Those who are deceitful, pretentious, cunning and full of conceit; those who are wicked and vile; those who enjoy rift, quarrel and strife; those who have anger and vengefulness; those who mock, ridicule or decry the Vedas²; those who are by their nature opposed to the world and harbour malice for everyone in it³; --- (2)

--- Those who are greedy and rapacious; those who are crooked and full of conceit; those who behave in a lecherous way and yearn for material pleasures and comforts; those who eye and greed for the wealth and women of others⁴; --- (3)

--- Oh mother, if I be given a chance to choose my fate, then let me attain a doomed destiny that is similar to the one such people are condemned to attain. (4)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 112.

²Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 40; (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 100; (iii) Chaupai line no. 25 that precedes Doha no. 121.

³Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 3-6 that precede Doha no. 39; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 23-24, 26-27 that precede Doha no. 121.

⁴Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 39.]

जे नहिं साधुसंग अनुरागे । परमारथ पथ बिमुख अभागे ॥ ५ ॥
 जे न भजहिं हरि नरतनु पाई । जिन्हहि न हरि हर सुजसु सोहाई ॥ ६ ॥
 तजि श्रुतिपंथु बाम पथ चलहीं । बंचक बिरचि बेष जगु छलहीं ॥ ७ ॥
 तिन्ह कै गति मोहि संकर देऊ । जननी जौं यहु जानौं भेऊ ॥ ८ ॥

jē nahim sādhusaṅga anurāgē. paramāratha patha bimukha abhāgē. 5.
 jē na bhajahim hari naratanu pā'ī. jinhahi na hari hara sujasu sōhā'ī. 6.
 taji śrutipanthu bāma patha calahim. bañcaka biraci bēṣa jagu chalahim. 7.
 tinha kai gati mōhi saṅkara dē'ū. janani jāum yahu jānaum bhē'ū. 8.

Those who have no interest in keeping company of saintly and pious persons, persons who are virtuous and holy¹; those unfortunate people who are opposed to the path of spiritualism and god realization; --- (5)

--- Those who do not worship Lord Hari even after obtaining a human body; those who cannot tolerate the glories of Lords Hari and Hara (i.e. Lord Vishnu and Shiva)²; --- (6)

--- Those who abandon the noble path shown by the Vedas and instead prefer to follow a path that is opposite of it³; those who are cheats and imposters as they deceive the world by their pretentious and cunning ways as well as their false appearances, --- (7)

--- Oh mother, if I ever knew the secret plot (hatched by my evil mother) then let Lord Shiva⁴ punish me in the same way as such persons are supposed to be punished for their crimes listed herein above.

[This verse can be read as follows also: “Oh mother, let Lord Shiva punish me for my sins in the same way such persons are punished if I ever knew about the secret plot that was hatched behind my back.”]* (8)

[Note—¹Refer to: (a) Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 40; (b) Vinai Patrika, verse no. 136.

²Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Aranya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8-9 that precede Doha no. 16; (b) Uttar Kand, (ii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 43—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 45; (iii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 53.

³Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-9 that precede Doha no. 16.

⁴Why has Bharat invoked Lord Shiva here? It is because Lord Shiva is very strict in following the path as laid down in the Vedas, and anyone who violates it invites the Lord's wrath and instant retribution—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 107.

Lord Shiva's witness to one's innocence is regarded as the best proof. In this regard, refer to the following verses of Ram Charit Manas: Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 258 (sage Vasishtha); (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 262 (Bharat); and (iii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 264 (Lord Ram).

*These public oaths of Bharat invoking the curse of the Creator as well as Lord Shiva, that if he is lying in any way then let him be punished for the gravest of sins a person may commit in his life, proved to everyone that he was not guilty of anything that happened in his absence, that he had no role in his mother Kaikeyi's plot that sent Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman to the forest, which in turn had resulted in the death of king Dasrath.

Veda Vyas' "Adhyatma Ramayan", Ayodhya Kand, Canto 7, verse no. 89 sums up Bharat's regrets as follows: "If I am a part of this evil conspiracy that led to Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman going to the forest and death of my father Dasrath, then let me be punished for a sin which is equivalent to killing a hundred Brahmins, and my guru Vasistha and his wife Arundhati."

A list of great sins is enumerated in Yagyawalkya Smriti, Prayachit Adhyaaye (chapter dealing with sins and their repentance), verse nos. 231—242.

In Valmiki Ramayan however, there is a long list of sins that Bharat cites to say that if he is at all part of this conspiracy, then let him be punished for a combined effect of all the sins—apropos: Valmiki Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, Canto 75, verse nos. 21-58.]

दो०. मातु भरत के बचन सुनि साँचे सरल सुभायँ ।

कहति राम प्रिय तात तुम्ह सदा बचन मन कायँ ॥ १६८ ॥

dōhā.

mātu bharata kē bacana suni sām̐cē sarala subhāyam̐.

kahati rāma priya tāta tumha sadā bacana mana kāyam̐. 168.

Hearing the above words of Bharat, words that were honest, truthful and free from any pretensions or deceit, the mother (Kaushalya) was very pleased (as she was now convinced of Bharat's innocence).

Hence, in order to give emotional comfort to Bharat and assuage his hurt feelings, she assured him: ‘My dear son (tāta)! You are truly dear to Lord Ram, and this love for you in the Lord’s heart (rāma priya tumha) is evident at all times in what he says about you, what he thinks of you, and what he does for you (sadā bacana mana kāyam)¹. (Doha no. 168)

[Note—¹Even the deity of the holy pilgrim site known as Prayag as well as sage Bharadwaj have endorsed this view as is evident in—Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 205 (Prayag); (ii) Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 208 (Bharadwaj).

Lord Ram too has praised Bharat lavishly in no uncertain terms, and declared that no matter what happens in this world, Bharat cannot go against him—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 231—to Doha no. 232.

Refer also to verse nos. 1-3 that follow herein below.]

चौ०. राम प्रानहु तें प्रान तुम्हारे । तुम्ह रघुपतिहि प्रानहु तें प्यारे ॥ १ ॥
 बिधु बिष चवै स्रवै हिमु आगी । होइ बारिचर बारि बिरागी ॥ २ ॥
 भाँ ग्यानु बरु मिटै न मोहू । तुम्ह रामहि प्रतिकूल न होहू ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

rāma prānahu tēm prāna tumhārē. tumha raghupatihi prānahu tēm pyārē. 1.
 bidhu biṣa cavai sravai himu āgī. hō'i bāricara bāri birāgī. 2.
 bha'ēm̐ gyānu baru miṭai na mōhū. tumha rāmahi pratikūla na hōhū. 3.

Mother Kaushalya continued: ‘Verily indeed, in all sooth and without gainsay, Ram is dearer to thee more than thou lovest thine own life, and similarly, thou art equally dear to the Lord of the Raghus (i.e. Lord Ram) who loves thee more than he wouldst care for his own life¹. (1)

Truly, even if the moon begins to drip poison (instead of spreading comfort, pleasure and peace by its cool and soothing moonlight), even if ice pellets of hail turn into a shower of fire balls, and even if creatures that cannot survive without water (such as the fish) abandon their love for water and dependence on it for their survival, --- (2)

--- Even if the influence of Moha (delusions and worldly attachments) are not overcome inspite of a person having full knowledge of the futility of it and its falsehood, being wise, enlightened and well-versed in spiritual philosophy as he is supposed to be, ---well, even if these impossible and incredulous things can actually happen, but still it is certain that thou cannot be opposed to Lord Ram under any circumstance². (3)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 208.

²Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 231; (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 233.]

मत तुम्हार यह जो जग कहहीं । सो सपनेहुँ सुख सुगति न लहहीं ॥ ४ ॥
 अस कहि मातु भरतु हियँ लाए । थन पय स्रवहिं नयन जल छाए ॥ ५ ॥

mata tumhāra yahu jō jaga kahahīm. sō sapanēhum̐ sukha sugati na lahahīm.
 4.
 asa kahi mātū bharatu hiyam̐ lā'ē. thana paya sravahim̐ nayana jala chā'ē. 5.

If anyone in this world says that the plot to send Lord Ram to the forest had your tacit support, or that you were a co-conspirator and had connived with your mother in the scheme, then such persons can never find peace and happiness even in their dreams.¹
 (4)

Saying this, the mother (Kaushalya) clasped Bharat to her bosom² even as milk began to drip from her breasts³ and her eyes became filled with tears. (5)

[Note—¹We have read earlier that some of the citizens had expressed their doubts about Bharat's involvement in the plot hatched by Kaikeyi, but they were immediately corrected by their fellow citizens who chided them for even thinking of this thing because Bharat can never be opposed to Lord Ram—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 48 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it.

²Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 165.

³Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 52.]

करत बिलाप बहुत यहि भाँती । बैठेहिं बीति गई सब राती ॥ ६ ॥
 बामदेउ बसिष्ठ तब आए । सचिव महाजन सकल बोलाए ॥ ७ ॥
 मुनि बहु भाँति भरत उपदेसे । कहि परमारथ बचन सुदेसे ॥ ८ ॥

karata bilāpa bahuta yahi bhām̐tī. baiṭhēhim̐ bīti ga'ī saba rātī. 6.
 bāmadē'u basiṣṭha taba ā'ē. saciva mahājana sakala bōlā'ē. 7.
 muni bahu bhām̐ti bharata upadēsē. kahi paramāratha bacana sudēsē. 8.

In this way, the whole night was spent by everyone as they sat grieving and lamenting sorely. (6)

At dawn of the next day, sages Vamdeo and Vasistha came in, and they summoned the ministers and other senior members of the court as well as of the society. (7)

The sages comforted and gave solace to Bharat in a variety of ways, speaking words of wisdom to him, and giving him advice that was appropriate for the occasion and would be for his long term good¹. (8)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 172—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 174.

In Veda Vyas' "Adhyatma Ramayan", Ayodhya Kand, Canto 7, verse nos. 91-107 we read elaborately how sage Vasistha has invoked spiritual philosophy and principles of metaphysics as enunciated in the Upanishads to comfort Bharat, encouraging him to abandon grief and have courage.

Now, let us quickly recount what sage Vasistha had told Bharat in Adhyatma Ramayan as cited herein above: "King Dasrath was old, wise, truthful, victorious, and true to his vows. He has enjoyed all the comforts and fruits of taking birth as a human being, has propitiated the Lord by donating a lot of wealth and doing the Ashwamegh Yagya (horse sacrifice) and performing other religious rituals. As a consequence, he has obtained Lord Vishnu himself in the form of his son Sri Ram—after having got all these benefits, he has gone, in the end, to the heaven and has become authorised (eligible) to sit on one half of the throne of Indra (the king of Gods) (93-94).

95-96. He is verily not worthy of feeling pity for and is a worthy subject fit for emancipation and salvation. You are unnecessarily mourning for him. See, Atma (soul) is eternally imperishable/indestructible, most pure and without any birth or destruction of any kind (i.e., it is timeless and immortal) (95), while the body is lifeless (gross), most impure and destructible (or prone to decay, decline and destruction). When one thinks in these terms, there is no scope of regrets, grief, remorse or lamentation of any kind (96).

97-98. If a father or a son dies, only the ignorant fools cry or mourn for him by beating their chests (97). But in this meaningless world, if a wise person has to suffer separation from anyone, it is the cause of (or it creates or excites) renunciation and detachment for him¹, and enhances his peace, tranquility, happiness and bliss (thinking that his encumbrances have been proportionately reduced) (98).

99-100. If any one has taken birth in this world, then surely death is attached to (or inevitable for) him. Hence, for all those who have taken birth, death is an unavoidable adjunct (99).

Every creature takes birth and dies according to his own deeds—but what an irony, look, inspite of knowing it, the foolish and ignorant people have so much grief or mourn for their kith and kin, their relatives and friends! (100).

101-102. Crores of (millions; that is, numerous) Brahmands (universes) have been destroyed (become extinct), numerous creations have passed away, all these oceans would dry up one day—then what should one rely (or depend) upon in this momentary life? (101).

This age (life) is like a drop of water hanging (or dangling) on the edge of a shaking or quivering leaf—it is momentary, transient, uncertain and unstable; it betrays and abandons without any warning. What reliance do you put on it? (102).

103-105. This soul has acquired this body as a result of the deeds done by it in its previous body (birth), and by virtue of the deeds done by this (present) body, it shall get the next birth (or body). In this manner, the soul repeatedly acquires one body after another (103).

Even as a man discards his old clothes and puts on new ones, so does a soul assume a new body by discarding the earlier one. Hence, what (or where) is the cause

of sorrows and grief in it? Because the Atma never takes birth, nor dies nor increases (or decreases) at any time (104-105).

106-108. It (the soul or Atma) is devoid (free) of the various faults, blemishes, shortcomings and misdemeanours, is eternal and timeless (without a beginning or end), is the embodiment (image) of pure consciousness, supreme truth and supreme bliss, is the witness to the mind-intellect complex, and is indestructible or imperishable (106).

That supreme Soul is one, without a match or a parallel, and is universally present uniformly. In this manner, you should become aware of the true nature of the Atma, become free from grief and remorse, and complete your work (or do your assigned duties in this world as has been destined or determined for you) (107)”.]

दो०. तात हृदयँ धीरजु धरहु करहु जो अवसर आजु ।
उठे भरत गुर बचन सुनि करन कहेउ सबु साजु ॥ १६९ ॥

dōhā.

tāta hr̥dayam̐ dhīraju dharahu karahu jō avasara āju.
uṭhē bharata gura bacana suni karana kahē'u sabu sāju. 169.

Sage Vasistha concluded by telling Bharat: ‘My dear (tāta)! Taking cognizance of what I have advised you and paying heed to it, have patience and courage in your heart, and do what is required of you to be done on this occasion.’

Hearing these words of his guru (moral preceptor, teacher and advisor), Bharat got up and gave instructions to make necessary arrangements so that what has to be done on this occasion could be done¹. (Doha no. 169)

[Note—¹What was to be done urgently and before anything else? King Dasrath’s body had been kept in a vessel of oil and was waiting to be cremated. This work was to be done on a priority basis. This was the clear instruction of sage Vasistha in Veda Vyas’ “Adhyatma Ramayan”, Ayodhya Kand, Canto 7, verse no. 108.

Hence, Bharat gave necessary instructions in this regard.]

चौ०. नृपतनु बेद बिदित अन्हवावा । परम बिचित्र बिमानु बनावा ॥ १ ॥
गहि पद भरत मातु सब राखी । रहीं रानि दरसन अभिलाषी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

nṛpatanu bēda bidita anhvāvā. parama bicitra bimānu banāvā. 1.
gahi pada bharata mātu saba rākhi. rahīm rāni darasana abhilāṣī. 2.

The king’s mortal remain was bathed in accordance with the rules laid down for such purposes in the Vedas, and then it was laid in state on a bier made especially for the king. (1)

Bharat then touched the feet of his mothers and escorted them to the king's body so that they can pay their last respects to him as they were very eager to see him for the last time*.

[*This verse can be read as follows also: "Bharat escorted his mothers to the dead body of his father as it lay on the bier for they were all very eager to see him for the last time. But when Bharat perceived that they would also join their husband on the funeral pyre at the time of cremation, he fell down and clasped their feet, begging them not to do so." (2)]

चंदन अगर भार बहु आए । अमित अनेक सुगंध सुहाए ॥ ३ ॥
सरजु तीर रचि चिता बनाई । जनु सुरपुर सोपान सुहाई ॥ ४ ॥
एहि बिधि दाह क्रिया सब कीन्ही । बिधिवत न्हाइ तिलांजुलि दीन्ही ॥ ५ ॥

candana agara bhāra bahu ā'ē. amita anēka sugandha suhā'ē. 3.
saraju tīra raci citā banā'ī. janu surapura sōpāna suhā'ī. 4.
ēhi bidhi dāha kriyā saba kīnhī. bidhivata nhā'i tilānjuli dīnhī. 5.

All sorts of auspicious things were collected in abundance on the occasion of king Dasrath's cremation, such as sandalwood and aloe, as well as many other kinds of pleasant scents and aromatic herbs. (3)

The funeral pyre was arranged on the banks of river Saryu, and it was well laid out and properly arranged in such a way that it resembled steps leading to the heaven¹. (4)

In this way, the king was honourably cremated and all rituals were gone through in a systematic manner. Then the mourners bathed in the river (Saryu) and offered seeds of sesame and sprinkled water to the departed soul as part of the funeral process². (5)

[Note—¹The pile of firewood and other things were arranged in such a way that the pyre's structure resembled a pyramid, broad at the base and gradually getting narrower in a step-wise fashion till it tapered off at the top where the body of Dasrath was laid. The fire was lit at the base, and it gradually spread over the whole pile.

²Refer also to: Veda Vyas' "Adhyatma Ramayan", Ayodhya Kand, Canto 7, verse nos. 109-110.]

सोधि सुमृति सब बेद पुराना । कीन्ह भरत दसगात बिधाना ॥ ६ ॥
जहँ जस मुनिबर आयसु दीन्हा । तहँ तस सहस भाँति सबु कीन्हा ॥ ७ ॥
भए बिसुद्ध दिए सब दाना । धेनु बाजि गज बाहन नाना ॥ ८ ॥

sōdhi sumṛti saba bēda purānā. kīnha bharata dasagāta bidhānā. 6.
jaham'jasa munibara āyasu dīnhā. taham'tasa sahasa bhām'ti sabu kīnhā. 7.
bha'ē bisud'dha di'ē saba dānā. dhēnu bāji gaja bāhana nānā. 8.

After ascertaining what the Vedas and the Purans prescribe for the funeral process and its associated rituals, Bharat did everything as ordained by them.

He performed the ritual called ‘Dasagāta’ wherein the person who carries out the funeral ritual of the dead person is obliged to offer a ball of boiled rice to the departed soul for ten continuous days from the day of cremation. (6)

Whatever the sage (Vasistha) ordered him to do on any given occasion, Bharat willingly obeyed him and carried out all his instructions. (7)

Keeping his mind and heart purified (i.e. not having any reluctance in carrying out his duties for peace of the departed soul, and not being miserly while making charities in the name of his father), Bharat liberally made charities and gave out alms in the form of cows, horses, elephants, chariots etc.¹ (8)

[Note—¹We must remember that Bharat was a ‘prince’ of a great kingdom. A person makes charities and gives alms in accordance to his abilities and social status. In olden days, it was routine for great kings and princes to hand out liberal largesse during certain occasions, one such being death of the king.

It is customary to make charities and give alms on behalf of the dead person on twelfth day of cremation. Refer: Valmiki’s Ramayana, Ayodhya Kand, Canto 77, verse no. 3.

Other occasions when such large scale charities were made were birth, marriage, coronation etc. We read about such occasions when similar charities were made—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 196 (birth of Lord Ram and his brothers); (ii) Doha no. 298 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 351 (marriage of Lord Ram); (b) Uttar Kand, (iv) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 12 (coronation of Lord Ram).]

दो०. सिंघासन भूषन बसन अन्न धरनि धन धाम ।

दिए भरत लहि भूमिसुर भे परिपूरन काम ॥ १७० ॥

dōhā.

siṅghāsana bhūṣana basana anna dharani dhana dhāma.

di'ē bharata lahi bhūmisura bhē paripūrana kāma. 170.

Bharat also donated furniture such as beds and seat, ornaments, clothes, cereals and other food items, land grants, treasures and houses on this occasion to Brahmins (bhūmisura), who received these charities and felt contented. (Doha no. 170)

चौ०. पितु हित भरत कीन्ह जसि करनी । सो मुख लाख जाइ नहिं बरनी ॥ १ ॥

सुदिनु सोधि मुनिबर तब आए । सचिव महाजन सकल बोलाए ॥ २ ॥

बैठे राजसभाँ सब जाई । पठए बोलि भरत दोउ भाई ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

pitu hita bharata kīnhi jasi karanī. sō mukha lākha jā'i nahir̥n baranī. 1.
 sudinu sōdhi munibara taba ā'ē. saciva mahājana sakala bōlā'ē. 2.
 baiṭhē rājasabhāṃ saba jā'ī. paṭha'ē bōli bharata dō'u bhā'ī. 3.

Whatever Bharat did for the benefit of his father (in the other world) were more than what one could describe by even a thousand tongues¹. (1)

After the funeral and its accompanying rites were over, the sage (i.e. Vasistha) decided on an auspicious day and time (and came to the royal palace). He also summoned ministers, courtiers and other senior members of the society. (2)

All of them assembled and sat down in the royal court. Then they sent for the two brothers (i.e. Bharat and Shatrughan)². (3)

[Note—¹To wit, Bharat left nothing undone, or fell short of what was expected from him to do, for the peace and happiness of the soul of his dead father, and whatever Bharat did were so outstanding, comprehensive and liberal so much so that all attempts to describe them would fail, or fall short of the actual praise they deserve. Bharat left nothing to chance, and whatever his guru, sage Vasistha, and other senior Brahmins advised him to do, he did cheerfully and with enthusiasm.

²The king had died, and the throne was vacant. At the end of the formal mourning period, which according to Hindu custom lasts for thirteen days from the date of cremation, the royal priest, sage Vasistha, decided to take the next step and initiate the process of appointing an heir to the throne. Out of the four brothers, only Bharat and Shatrughan were present in Ayodhya at the time, so the sage called both the brothers to start the process. Further, since Bharat was supposed to get the crown as demanded by Kaikeyi, and since king Dasrath had made no specific declaration that this will not happen, that his wife had no role and locus standi to decide on matters of state, and also since Lord Ram, the natural inheritor of the crown was out in the forest for fourteen long years, and the throne could not be left vacant, it was decided by consensus of everyone that the crown of the kingdom devolves on Bharat by default, even if there was no express instructions of the king in this regard.

Hence, the two brothers were called in this meeting held in the royal court so as to persuade Bharat to accept the crown of the kingdom. The assembly decided that if Bharat feels reluctant, then he would be requested to act as a ruler only for the interim period when Lord Ram was out of the kingdom, and as soon as the Lord returns he can step down and hand over the powers to the Lord. This will be absolutely clear a little while later when we read Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 174—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 175 herein below.]

भरतु बसिष्ठ निकट बैठारे । नीति धरममय बचन उचारे ॥ ४ ॥

प्रथम कथा सब मुनिबर बरनी । कैकड़ कुटिल कीन्ह जसि करनी ॥ ५ ॥

भूप धरमब्रतु सत्य सराहा । जेहिं तनु परिहरि प्रेमु निबाहा ॥ ६ ॥

bharatu basiṣṭha nikāṭa baiṭhārē. nīti dharamamaya bacana ucārē. 4.
 prathama kathā saba munibara baranī. kaika'i kuṭila kīnhi jasi karanī. 5.

bhūpa dharamabratu satya sarāhā. jēhim tanu parihari prēmu nibāhā. 6.

Sage Vasistha made Bharat sit close to him and then spoke words of wisdom to him, advising Bharat in accordance with the principles and rules of Dharma (righteousness, probity, propriety, ethics, morality, and nobility of thought and conduct). (4)

To begin with, the sage gave an account of all the wicked things done by Kaikeyi. (5)

He praised king Dasrath for his strong adherence to the rules of truthfulness and upholding the sanctity of his promises and vows, which even cost him his life, but gave him the honour of being faithful to his principles and also to the purity of the virtues of love and affection (for Lord Ram, to which he was committed throughout his life)¹. (6)

[Note—¹Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 207 where sage Bharadwaj has also praised this excellent quality of king Dasrath.

He (king Dasrath) was honoured chiefly for the following things: One, he kept his promises made to Kaikeyi a very long time ago, instead of rescinding on them. This showed that he was truthful to his words and never broke the sanctity of vows. Had he wanted, it was easy for him to rebuke his wicked wife and throw her into prison, telling her that personal promises ought to be limited to the personal sphere, and they cannot be allowed to play a role in serious matters of state that have a bearing on the whole society. {Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 27—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 29; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 2-5 that precede Doha no. 48.}

Two, he had taken a vow that his life would be tied to his affection for Lord Ram, and if he was separated from the Lord he would not live. This vow too was honoured by him. {Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precede Doha no. 151; (b) Ayodhya Kand, (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 155—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 156.}

Three, true love is one that stands the test of time, and a true lover would sacrifice his life in case the person who is loved suffers on his account, or is separated from him. In the case of Dasrath, it was Lord Ram whom he truly loved beyond measure, and as the Lord had to suffer on Dasrath's account, so it was a sort of self-punishment that Dasrath inflicted upon himself for the Lord's troubles. By dying, the king proved that he was true in his love for the Lord as he willingly made the ultimate sacrifice of death. {Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 156.}

We have noted earlier that even Kaushalya lauded her husband for dying to uphold the sanctity of his love for Lord Ram, for she regretted that she could not follow his example by leaving her mortal coil, but continued to live. {Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 166.}

Refer also to: Geetawali Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, verse no. 21.]

कहत राम गुन सील सुभाऊ । सजल नयन पुलकेउ मुनिराऊ ॥ ७ ॥

बहुरि लखन सिय प्रीति बखानी । सोक सनेह मगन मुनि ग्यानी ॥ ८ ॥

kahata rāma guna sila subhā'ū. sajala nayana pulakē'u munirā'ū. 7.
bahuri lakhana siya prīti bakhānī. sōka sanēha magana muni gyānī. 8.

While narrating the glorious virtues, good manners and courteous nature of Lord Ram¹, the great sage's (i.e. Vasistha's) eyes were filled with tears and his body became thrilled. (7)

Then the sage narrated the affection and love for the Lord that Sita and Laxman had², and as he did it the sage was overcome with grief himself, and emotions of affection overwhelmed him. (8)

[Note—¹Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 41; (ii) Doha no. 51 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it; (iii) Doha no. 126—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 127; (iv) Doha no. 165 along with Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it. Here we observe that one stellar and outstanding quality in Lord Ram's character is that he showed no anger, repugnance or shock, or harboured any kind of ill-will or rancour when told to go to the forest, and instead treated the news calmly with equanimity and fortitude, something which anyone else in the Lord's place would have found impossible to do.

Refer also to: Geetawali Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, verse no. 57.

²Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 122; (ii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precede Doha no. 123; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 166.]

दो०. सुनहु भरत भावी प्रबल बिलखि कहेउ मुनिनाथ ।
हानि लाभु जीवनु मरनु जसु अपजसु बिधि हाथ ॥ १७१ ॥
dōhā.

sunahu bharata bhāvī prabala bilakhi kahē'u muninātha.
hāni lābhu jīvanu maranu jasu apajasu bidhi hātha. 171.

Then sage Vasistha sorrowfully exclaimed: 'Listen Bharat, the fiat of fate and the dictates of destiny are very powerful and inviolable factors. Loses and gains, life and death, fame and infamy—all such matters are in the hands of the Creator (bidhi hātha) (because it is he who determines a person's fate, and one has no control over it)¹. (Doha no. 171)

[Note—¹In this context, refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 56; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 97; (iii) Doha no. 124; (b) Ayodhya Kand, (iv) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 92—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 93; (v) Doha no. 206 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it; (vi) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 263.

All these above cited verses reiterate that there are certain things in a person's life over which he or she has no control, and hence it is futile to accuse Kaikeyi as being the culprit of whatever happened in Ayodhya, or to blame king Dasrath for anything.]

चौ०. अस बिचारि केहि देइअ दोसू । ब्यरथ काहि पर कीजिअ रोसू ॥ १ ॥

तात बिचारु करहु मन माहीं । सोच जोगु दसरथु नृपु नाहीं ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

asa bicāri kēhi dē'i'a dōsū. byaratha kāhi para kīji'a rōsū. 1.

tāta bicāru karahu mana māhīm. sōca jōgu dasarathu nrpu nāhīm. 2.

Sage Vasistha continued to comfort Bharat: ‘Keeping this in mind, whom should a person blame for misfortunes, and who can a person accuse of any wrong-doing?

Therefore, it is futile to get angry at anyone for any misfortune that befalls on a person, or for the misery and grief that one has to go through (for everything unfolds according to the fiat of fate, the dictates of destiny, and the provisions of providence that are determined for a particular creature by the Creator)¹. (1)

My dear (tāta), think over these things and consider all aspects in your Mana (mind and heart).

Ponder over them, which would help you to come to the conclusion that king Dasrath is not at all worthy of lamenting and grieving for². (2)

[Note—¹Sage Bharadwaj has also said a similar thing to Bharat in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 206 along with Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it.

²In the verses that follow herein below, viz. from Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 172—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 173, we read that sage Vasistha tells Bharat not to regret for his father Dasrath, as he was an honourable man worthy of praise. Then the sage goes on to list the characteristics of those for whom one should feel pity and regretful as they have fallen from the path of goodness, and lead a life that is sinful and unrighteous. Now let us see in brief who such persons are, and what their characteristics are, before we actually start reading the text in detail—

“Listen dear Bharat. King Dasrath was an extremely privileged and noble soul, and there is no cause for regretting or lamenting for him. One must regret and lament for a Brahmin (a member of the learned class) who has fallen from the auspicious path shown by the Vedas, for a king who does not know and obey the laws and ethics of kingship and for whom his subjects is not as dear as his own life, one must regret and lament for a Vaishya (trader or businessman) who is extremely miserly and does not show respect and hospitality to a guest in spite of him being rich and able, who is not devoted to the Lord in his heart and who is not gentle and friendly in nature, one must regret and lament for a Shudra (a member of the serving class) who finds pleasure in insulting a Brahmin (those who are senior and learned), is haughty and lacks the basics of wisdom and intelligence, one must regret and lament for a woman who has fallen from her vows of chastity and loyalty towards her husband, who loves being wicked and pervert, and who enjoys conceit and dirty tricks, one must regret and lament for a mendicant or a monk who falls from his chosen path of Sanyas (renunciation, detachment, self restraint etc.), one must regret and lament for those who do not obey their Gurus (teachers, moral preceptors, guides and advisors), one must regret and lament for a Grihastha (householder) who falls from his path and violates the laws of ethical conduct and life that is prescribed in the scriptures for him, one must regret and lament for an ascetic who does not obey the rules of renunciation,

detachment and dispassion, who is engrossed in all sorts of worldly affairs, and who has no wisdom and enlightenment, one must regret and lament for a Vaanprastha (a forest dweller) who does not do Tapa (austerity and penance) but has his attention fixed on enjoyments of the material pleasures and comforts of this world of sense objects, one must regret and lament for a person who is a tattler and back-biter who does not hesitate in betraying, one must regret and lament for a person who has a natural habit of being angry at the trifles of things or for no rhyme or reason, one must regret and lament for a person who is always inimical towards or opposed to his parents, his Guru and his friends, one must regret and lament for a person who always harms the interest and well-being of others though he has nothing to gain from it, and one must regret and lament for a person who does not abandon all deceit and conceit to become an honest and truthful person who is also a devotee of Lord Hari (Vishnu; the Supreme Lord).”]

सोचिअ बिप्र जो बेद बिहीना । तजि निज धरमु बिषय लयलीना ॥ ३ ॥

सोचिअ नृपति जो नीति न जाना । जेहि न प्रजा प्रिय प्राण समाना ॥ ४ ॥

sōci'a bipra jō bēda bihīnā. taji nija dharamu biṣaya layalīnā. 3.

sōci'a nrpati jō nīti na jānā. jēhi na prajā priya prāna samānā. 4.

Pitiable and reproachable is a Brahmin who has no knowledge of the Vedas, who has abandoned the path of Dharma (i.e. the path of righteousness, probity, propriety, ethics, morality, and nobility of thought and conduct) and instead follows the path of indulgence in worldly affairs.

[To wit, one must have pity and reproach for a Brahmin who has not studied the scriptures, and being ignorant of what they define as being the noble path of Dharma, such a person would neither do his duties properly nor would he be able to guide others to do theirs. Such a person falls foul of Dharma and goes astray from the noble path he is expected to follow. Instead of practicing the glorious virtues of equanimity, dispassion, detachment and renunciation, he gets involved in pursuing the pleasures of the sense organs and material comforts of the world.] (3)

Pitiable and reproachable is a king who is ignorant of the rules of law and politics that incorporate the principles of administration, justice, diplomacy and good conduct that a king ought to be well versed in.

Similarly, one must have pity for and reproach a king who does not love his subjects as much as he loves his own life. [To wit, a king for whom his subjects are not as dear to him as his own life is, is worthy of pity, because a king is expected to be very careful and concerned about the welfare of the subjects of his kingdom, and he must keep the interests and happiness of his subjects above his personal interests and happiness.] (4)

सोचिअ बयसु कृपन धनवानू । जो न अतिथि सिव भगति सुजानू ॥ ५ ॥

सोचिअ सूदु बिप्र अवमानी । मुखर मानप्रिय ग्यान गुमानी ॥ ६ ॥

sōci'a bayasu kṛpana dhanavānū. jō na atithi siva bhagati sujānū. 5.
sōci'a sūdrū bipra avamānī. mukhara mānapriya gyāna gumānī. 6.

One must pity and have reproach for a Vaishya (the trading community) who is miserly inspite of being rich and having abundance of resources.

Pitiable and reproachable is a Vaishya who does not care about serving a guest (or dithers in doing so; who does not welcome a guest and prefers to neglect the latter).

Similarly, a Vaishya is worthy of pity and reproach who does not have devotion for Lord Shiva and does not worship him. (5)

Pitiable and reproachable is a Shudra (the section of the society that serves other senior members of the society) who insults the Brahmin; who is talkative and speaks nonsense; who wants to have praise and occupy a status for which he is not eligible; and who has a sense of false pride for the limited knowledge he has.

[To wit, a Shudra who is boastful, proud, haughty and arrogant, who has no compunctions in insulting others much senior to him, who transgresses limits and violates norms of decent conduct set for him, and who thinks himself to be superior to others in all respects though he is not, such a person is indeed worthy of pity and contempt.] (6)

सोचिअ पुनि पति बंचक नारी । कुटिल कलहप्रिय इच्छाचारी ॥ ७ ॥
सोचिअ बटु निज ब्रतु परिहरई । जो नहिं गुर आयसु अनुसरई ॥ ८ ॥

sōci'a puni pati bañcaka nārī. kuṭila kalahapriya icchācārī. 7.
sōci'a baṭu nija bratu parihara'ī. jō nahim gura āyasu anusara'ī. 8.

Similarly, one should have pity and reproach for a woman who abandons her husband and pursues someone else, who is wicked, crooked and quarrelsome, and who follows her own wishes and impulses without taking into account the probity and propriety of her actions. (7)

Pitiable and reproachable is a 'Batuk' ('baṭu'; a young boy, usually a Brahmin, who practices celibacy while studying under a guru) who breaks his vows (of celibacy, abstinence from indulgences and commitment to study), is careless about his duties and responsibilities (as a student), and who disobeys his teacher and is disrespectful towards him.

[To wit, one must have pity for and reproach a student who does not focus on his studies and disobeys his teacher, who indulges in all sorts of worldly things but neglects his studies, for these bad habits would ill prepare him to face the realities of life when he grows up. Such a person would ruin his whole career; he would grow up to become a burden on the society and his family instead of being an asset for them, one who could have positively contributed towards their welfare and well-being when he becomes adult, but fails to do so.] (8)

दो०. सोचिअ गृही जो मोह बस करइ करम पथ त्याग ।

सोचिअ जती प्रपंच रत बिगत बिबेक बिराग ॥ १७२ ॥

dōhā.

sōci'a grhī jō mōha basa kara'i karama patha tyāga.
sōci'a jatī prapañca rata bigata bibēka birāga. 172.

A householder is worthy of pity and reproachable who falls prey to falsehoods, delusions and attachment to the material things of this world, as a result of which he falls astray from the path of righteousness and noble conduct, and forsakes his duties and responsibilities.

[To wit, a householder is expected to lead an exemplary life of a true noble gentleman, one who acts in a conscientious way, one who always upholds the laws of Dharma and does his duties diligently. But if he becomes selfish and biased, if he becomes greedy and rapacious, if he forsakes the path of righteousness and nobility of conduct and thought, then surely and certainly he is to be pitied for, as he would have missed the chance of acquiring merit for his deeds in this life, which in turn ruins his future.]

Similarly, pitiable and reproachable is an ascetic or a recluse who gets involved in the affairs of the material world, and has negative traits such as pretensions, deceit and falsehood, instead of following the path of renunciation, dispassion, truthfulness, wisdom and enlightenment that is ordained for him and which he is expected to follow.

[To wit, an ascetic or a recluse is supposed to practice renunciation, detachment and dispassion, he is expected to distance himself from all worldly affairs. But if a person still remains attached to the world and longs for the comforts and pleasures of the sense objects of the material world even after declaring himself to be a recluse, then surely and certainly he is worthy of pity and contempt. And like the case of the householder who does not follow the path designed for him, leading to his ultimate fall, the ascetic or the recluse too fails to acquire any spiritual merit that would help him to attain deliverance, emancipation and salvation for his soul for which he had left the world to become a recluse in the first place. On the contrary, he is far worse, for on the one hand he had lost whatever little comfort that was available to him when he was a householder earlier, and on the other hand he gets nothing in terms of spiritual merit or peace for his soul, leaving him in the lurch, for he is neither here nor there.] (Doha no. 172)

चौ०. बैखानस सोइ सोचै जोगू । तपु बिहाइ जेहि भावइ भोगू ॥ १ ॥

सोचिअ पिसुन अकारन क्रोधी । जननि जनक गुर बंधु बिरोधी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

baikhānasa sō'i sōcai jōgū. tapu bihā'i jēhi bhāva'i bhōgū. 1.
sōci'a pisuna akārana krōdhī. janani janaka gura bandhu birōdhī. 2.

A renunciate, an ascetic and a hermit are indeed worthy of pity and reproach if they forsake the path of doing Tapa (penance, austerity), and instead long for material pleasures of the world and like to enjoy the comforts of the sense organs.

[To wit, if a hermit or an ascetic who longs for sensual comforts and pleasures of the material world instead of finding interest in observing austerities and penances

for which he had left the material world earlier and declared his aim to do Tapa to purify his soul and prepare it for attaining deliverance, emancipation and salvation, then surely he has fallen from his chosen spiritual path, and is therefore worthy of contempt and pity.]¹ (1)

One must also have pity and reproachable for a wicked person who is a backbiter and a tattler, who becomes angry at others for no rhyme or reason, as well as a person who is opposed to, is an enemy of, and harbours ill-will against his own parents, his guru (teacher, moral preceptor and spiritual guide) and his kith and kin. (2)

[Note—¹This verse is an extension of what has been said in the second line of Doha no. 172 herein above.]

सब बिधि सोचिअ पर अपकारी । निज तनु पोषक निरदय भारी ॥ ३ ॥
सोचनीय सबहीं बिधि सोई । जो न छाड़ि छलु हरि जन होई ॥ ४ ॥

saba bidhi sōci'a para apakārī. nija tanu pōṣaka niradaya bhārī. 3.
sōcanīya sabahīm bidhi sōī. jō na chāḍi chalu hari jana hōī. 4.

A person who always thinks of causing harm to others, who harbours malice, envy and ill-will for everyone, is indeed pitiable and reproachable, and so is a person who is concerned only about gratifying the urges of his own body and its sense organs while being exceptionally cruel and merciless to others.

[To wit, a person who has wickedness in his heart, who does not have piety and noble characters, is worthy of pity.] (3)

Similarly, a person who does not submit himself sincerely to Lord Hari, who is not a devotee of the Lord God after forsaking all kinds of deceit, conceit and pretensions, is indeed worthy of pity and reproach¹.

[To wit, a person who only pretends to be a devotee of the Lord, but in fact is not, for he uses it as a ploy to deceive the world into thinking him to be religious and god fearing person in order to meet his selfish ends, is contemptible and worthy of pity.]* (4)

[Note—¹A similar idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, (a) Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 301; (b) Lanka Kand, (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 3.

Refer also to: Kavitawali Ramayan, Uttar Kand, verse no. 70.

*Having outlined the characteristics of person for whom one should feel pity and sorrowful, lamenting at their fate and praying for their soul, as enumerated in the preceding verses, sage Vasistha would now tell Bharat why he should not grieve and feel sorry for his father, king Dasrath, in the verses that follow herein below, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 172—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 174—

Briefly, the sage said: “The king of Kaushal, i.e. Dasrath, is not someone who should be lamented and grieved for. His auspicious deeds, his magnificent glory, his righteous character and his noble demeanour are well known and established in all the

four corners of the world. There has never been and will never again be a king who can be compared with your father Dasrath. Brahma (the creator), Hari (Vishnu the sustainer), Shiva (the concluder), and the king of Gods (Indra)—all of them laud him and sing his praises in unequivocal terms. Say, who can sufficiently praise a man who has had the great and rare fortune to have sons like Lord Ram, Laxman, Shatrughan and Bharat. The king is praise-worthy by all accounts, and there is no cause why one should lament, regret or grieve for him.”]

सोचनीय नहिं कोसलराऊ । भुवन चारिदस प्रगट प्रभाऊ ॥ ५ ॥

भयउ न अहइ न अब होनिहारा । भूप भरत जस पिता तुम्हारा ॥ ६ ॥

बिधि हरि हरुसुरपति दिसिनाथा । बरनहिं सब दसरथ गुन गाथा ॥ ७ ॥

sōcanīya nahim kōsalarā'ū. bhuvana cāridasa pragaṭa prabhā'ū. 5.
bhaya'u na aha'i na aba hōnihārā. bhūpa bharata jasa pitā tumhārā. 6.
bidhi hari haru surapati disināthā. baranahim saba dasaratha guna gāthā. 7.

But, the noble king of Kaushal (i.e. king Dasrath) is not at all worthy of feeling pity for, or worth grieving and mourning for, for he was so great that his fame and glories are well known in all the fourteen divisions of this creation, making him virtually immortal in the realms of history¹. (5)

Bharat, there has not been in the past, and there will not be in the future too a king as glorious, illustrious and honourable as your father Dasrath was. (6)

Even the Creator Brahma, Lord Hari (Vishnu), Lord Har (Shiva), Indra (the king of gods) as well as the custodians or patron deities of the ten corners of the world² laud the glories and virtues of king Dasrath unequivocally. (8)

[Note—¹The idea is that king Dasrath was not an ordinary king, but one whose virtues and glories had spread everywhere in this creation. Everyone honoured and respected him. So there is no reason why one should regret for him, or have pity for his soul.

The known world has been divided into fourteen parts, seven upper and seven lower. These divisions are the following:

(A) The upper worlds called Urdhva Lokas are seven in number:—(i) Bhu/Bhūḥ, (ii) Bhuvaha/Bhuvah, (iii) Swaha/Swah, (iv) Maha/Mah, (v) Janaha/Janah, (vi) Tapaha/Tapah, and (vii) Satyam/Satyam.

(B) The seven nether worlds or lower worlds called Adhaha/Adhah Loka:—(i) Atal/Atala, (ii) Vital/Vitala, (iii) Satal/Sutala, (iv) Rasaatal/Rasātala, (v) Talaatal/Talātala, (vi) Mahaatal/Mahātal, and (vii) Paataal/Pātāla. The total number of Lokas is, therefore, fourteen.

The *Mundak Upanishad* of Atharva Veda, Mundak (Canto)1, section 1, verse no. 1 says that these fourteen Bhuvans are protected by Brahma the creator who created this world.

The Atharva Veda's *Gopal Uttar Tapini Upanishad*, verse no. 35 says that Brahma-Loka is like the ceremonial umbrella on the head of Lord Vishnu, while the seven nether worlds known as the 'Patal-Lokas' represent the Lord's feet.

²The ten corners of the world are the following: north, north-east, east, south-east, south, south-west, west, north-west, zenith and nadir. Each corner has its patron deity who is the guardian of his area.]

दो०. कहहु तात केहि भाँति कोउ करिहि बड़ाई तासु।

राम लखन तुम्ह सत्रुहन सरिस सुअन सुचि जासु ॥ १७३ ॥

dōhā.

kahahu tāta kēhi bhāmṭi kō'u karihi baṛā'ī tāsū.

rāma lakhana tumha satruhana sarisa su'ana suci jāsu. 173.

Continuing his praise for king Dasrath, sage Vasistha told Bharat: 'Say my dear (kahahu tāta), who can sufficiently praise him (i.e. king Dasrath) who was so great as to be blessed by four virtuous sons like Lord Ram, Laxman, yourself (i.e. Bharat) and Shatrughan?'¹ (Doha no. 173)

[Note—¹Later on we shall read that sage Bharadwaj too will praise king Dasrath almost in the same way as sage Vasistha has praised him now. The occasion was when Bharat had gone to meet sage Bharadwaj while he was travelling to Chitrakoot to meet Lord Ram—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 209 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 16; and (b) Ayodhya Kand, (ii) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 4.]

चौ०. सब प्रकार भूपति बड़भागी । बादि बिषादु करिअ तेहि लागी ॥ १ ॥

यहु सुनि समुझि सोचु परिहरहू । सिर धरि राज रजायसु करहू ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

saba prakāra bhūpati baṛabhāgī. bādi biṣādu kari'a tēhi lāgī. 1.

yahu suni samujhi sōcu pariharahū. sira dhari rāja rajāyasu karahū. 2.

'Oh Bharat, the king (your father Dasrath) was most fortunate, blessed and lucky in everyway. Therefore, you ought not to grieve and feel sorry for him. (1)

By paying attention to these facts about Dasrath that you hear from me, and giving thought to what is being said about him, you will serve him best and do the right thing by abandoning grieving and mourning for him.

Further, you will do him a great service and gain merit yourself by obeying his commands by accepting the crown of the kingdom and ruling it in deference to his wishes.

[To wit, it is expected of a son to obey the instructions of his father, especially if such wishes are the last ones before the father dies. So, you will be doing an honourable thing to accept the crown and rule the kingdom as your father had wished.] (2)

रायँ राजपदु तुम्ह कहँ दीन्हा । पिता बचनु फुर चाहिअ कीन्हा ॥ ३ ॥
तजे रामु जेहिं बचनहि लागी । तनु परिहरेउ राम बिरहागी ॥ ४ ॥

rāyam' rājapadu tumha kahum' dīnhā. pitā bacanu phura cāhi'a kīnhā. 3.
tajē rāmu jēhiṁ bacanahi lāgī. tanu pariharē'u rāma birahāgī. 4.

The king has bestowed the kingdom and its crown upon you, and you must be obedient to accept your father's wishes and honour his words with steadfastness and diligence. (3)

It was to honour the words of his father that Lord Ram had forsaken (his right to) the throne and had cheerfully gone to the forest, which subsequently led to the catastrophic development when the king had shed his own body in grief of separation from the Lord¹. (4)

[Note—¹Sage Vasistha told Bharat: “Dear Bharat, listen attentively. It is of paramount importance for great souls to honour their own words as was done by king Dasrath, even if it means immense suffering and making great sacrifices, which the king did by suffering intense agony and grief upon separation from his beloved son, and then dying in grief of separation. Similarly, it is equally important for an honorable son to obey his father and keep his words, even if it means great sufferings and making sacrifices, as was done by Lord Ram who had no second thoughts and cheerfully went to the forest in spite of being well aware of the hardships he would encounter there. You, Bharat, belong to the same illustrious and noble family where promises and words of honour are sacrosanct and inviolable. Therefore, it well behooves of you to respect your father's words that were given to your mother, whereby you are to get the crown of Ayodhya even as Lord Ram was to go to the forest. Now, see, Lord Ram has fully honoured his part of the bargain, and now it is you who should emulate your elder brother, Lord Ram, to honour your part of the deal. By doing so, you will get merit and honour, and you will be doing the right thing.”]

नृपहि बचन प्रिय नहिं प्रिय प्राणा । करहु तात पितु बचन प्रवाना ॥ ५ ॥
करहु सीस धरि भूप रजाई । हइ तुम्ह कहँ सब भाँति भलाई ॥ ६ ॥

nṛpahi bacana priya nahim' priya prānā. karahu tāta pitu bacana pravānā. 5.
karahu sīsa dhari bhūpa rajā'ī. ha'i tumha kaham' saba bhām'ti bhalā'ī. 6.

You must have the attitude that the king's words are most dear, inviolable and sacrosanct, and there are more valuable than your own life¹.

Keeping this virtue in mind, you must prove truthful to your father's words by honouring them. (5)

You must keep the commands of the king on your head (i.e. you must honour your father's words by bowing your head with full reverence to him), for therein it lies your welfare and merit in every way. (6)

[Note—¹In this context, let us recall what king Dasrath has declared in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 28. Dasrath says: “It has been an honourable tradition in the illustrious family of king Raghu that one must honour his words even it meant that one would have to lose one’s life, for there is no greater sin and contemptible thing to do than to renegade on one’s words of honour given to someone.”]

परसुराम पितु अग्या राखी । मारी मातु लोक सब साखी ॥ ७ ॥
तनय जजातिहि जौबनु दयऊ । पितु अग्याँ अघ अजसु न भयऊ ॥ ८ ॥

parasurāma pitu agyā rākhī. mārī mātu lōka saba sākhī. 7.
tanaya jajātihi jaubanu daya'ū. pitu agyām' agha ajasu na bhaya'ū. 8.

Sage Parashuram had killed his own mother in order to obey his father’s command¹, and the whole world bears testimony to this fact. (7)

Similarly, Yayaati’s son (named Puru) had given his own youth to his old and infirm father so that the latter can enjoy sensual pleasures of the world², but since it was done in deference to the wishes of his father, the son got no discredit for this most controversial deed of his (that he allowed his old father to enjoy sensual pleasures at his cost by exchanging his own youth with his father’s old age and infirm body).’* (8)

[Note—¹The story of sage Parashuram beheading his mother on instructions of his father is briefly as follows;

Parashuram was the youngest of the five sons of sage Jamdaagni and his wife Renuka. He had subdued the haughty Kshatriya race or the warrior race led by king Kaartavirya who had become tyrannical and were oppressing others. The story goes that once Jamdagni doubted the infidelity of his wife Renuka, and therefore asked his sons to behead her. The four sons refused and were cursed by him, but Parashuram did as told. The father was pleased and asked Parashuram to request for a boon, upon which the latter requested that his mother be revived, his brothers be pardoned, and Jamdagni should discard his angry temperament. The father agreed to all.

²The story of Yayaati is narrated in Mahabharat, Adi Parva, Cantos. 70-76. In brief it is as follows:

Yayaati was the second of the six sons of king Nahush, who was the 10th descendent of the ancient king Daksha. Yayaati was so competent that he inherited the kingdom of his father. He was very valiant, righteous, and a great devotee of Lord God. It so happened that one day Yayaati approached a well as he was very thirsty. There he found a heavenly damsel known as ‘Devayaani’ inside the well, as she had been dumped there by Sharmistha, a daughter of a Daitya (a class of demons) Vrishparva.

The king rescued Devayaani by pulling her out of the well by holding her right hand, and then he took her to his kingdom to marry her.

Meanwhile, sage Shukracharya, the Guru of the Daityas, was very angry at this mischief of daughter of one of his disciples, so he decided to abandon them. Taken aback and fearing a curse from the sage as well as a backlash from her father,

Sharmistha agreed to serve Devayaani as her maid, along with a thousand of her own attendants.

Yayaati begot two sons from Devayaani, and as was the wont of kings of ancient times, he also wedded Sharmistha privately and produced three sons from her.

When the infidelity of her husband became known to Devayaani, she went and complained to sage Shukracharya, who was so annoyed with the king that he cursed him to become old and lose his libido.

The king asked for forgiveness and prayed that his curse be somehow mitigated. So the sage gave him a respite, telling him that he can exchange his old age with someone who is willing to give him his own young age and accept the king's old age. Yayaati asked all his five sons, Yadu, Turvasu, Druhmhu, Anu and Puru, to lend him their young age, but out of the five only the youngest son, Puru, accepted to lend his young age to his father for one thousand years. The king cursed his four elder sons who had declined, but blessed Puru and told him that at the end of this period he would get back his age and vigour as well as would inherit the kingdom.

At the end of the thousand years, Yayaati developed dispassion and renounced all worldly affairs. He made Puru his heir to the throne, as promised. The Brahmins (elders of the society) approached Yayaati on behalf of the older sons and said that he should have transferred power to his eldest son (Yadu), to which Yayaati replied that a disobedient son has no right or claim over the property of his father, for a son who is obedient and loyal to his parents is one who is deemed to be a true son. This view was endorsed by sage Shukracharya too, and backed by the subjects of the kingdom.

Yayaati did severe Tapa (penance, austerity) for another one thousand years, and as a reward of it he went to the heaven. In the heaven, the king of gods, Indra, interviewed Yayaati and asked him how hard or severe Tapa had he done. Instead of showing humility and shying away from boast, Yayaati replied proudly and haughtily that his Tapa was so great that it surpassed that done by anyone else, including the gods or the humans such as great sages and ascetics etc.

As a result of this haughtiness, boastfulness and show of pride, characters that are deemed to be negative and unbecoming of someone aspiring for an abode in the heaven, he was expelled and made to fall from heaven. When the gods saw him repenting in a pitiable condition, they were moved and had sympathy for him. So, while he was tumbling down from heaven, the gods pushed him to the ground where king Ashtak performed a fire sacrifice.

King Ashtak was astonished at seeing someone falling from the heaven and landing on his ground, so he enquired about the reason. Yayaati told him that there are 'seven doors to heaven', viz. Tapa (penance), Daan (charity), Shanti (peace), Dama (self control of the sense organs), Loka-Lajja (behaving in a proper way; upholding decorum and norms of good behaviour in society; not doing anything that breaks tradition and invites ridicule), Saralta (simplicity, humility), and Daya (mercy, compassion, kindness).

But if someone becomes proud of his above achievements and goes about boasting of them, then all his merit becomes null and void, and the doors of heaven close for him. Yayaati regretted sorely that he lost heaven because he was trapped by Indra, the cunning king of gods, to praise himself and feel proud of his meritorious deeds, something which is a negative trait of character, and debars a person from his claim to heaven.

King Ashtak took pity on Yayaati, and he used the power of his own meritorious life to send Yayaati back to the forest, thereby preventing him from landing permanently on earth and entering the cycle of birth and death once again.

*Sage Vasistha invokes these two extraordinary examples to impress upon Bharat that even if the father's orders are not correct, are irregular, unconventional, and fall short of being proper and noble, still a son would get merit by obeying them. Mother Kaushalya had also endorsed this view in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 55.

The sage means that he understands Bharat's reluctance to accept the crown because it rightfully belongs to his elder brother Lord Ram, and not to him. Besides this traditional rule of inheritance, the crown was snatched from Lord Ram by adopting crooked means by Bharat's own mother, Kaikeyi, which makes Bharat rightly feel guilty of wrong-doing and appearing to usurp the crown by unscrupulous means. But, the sage assures Bharat, he should not feel guilty, and he will not be discredited or blamed of any wrong-doing, because he would simply be obeying his father's orders to accept the crown, which he is obliged to obey.]

दो०. अनुचित उचित बिचारु तजि जे पालहिं पितु बैन ।
ते भाजन सुख सुजस के बसहिं अमरपति ऐन ॥ १७४ ॥

dōhā.

anucita ucita bicāru taji jē pālahim̐ pitu baina.
tē bhājana sukha sujasa kē basahim̐ amarapati aina. 174.

Sage Vasistha told Bharat: 'A person (i.e. a son) who obeys his father's orders without considering whether they are proper or not becomes eligible to acquire merit and honours for doing so. He gets happiness and credit for obeying his father while he is alive, and when he dies he goes to the heaven to live amongst the immortal gods.'¹ (Doha no. 174)

[Note—¹Sage Bharadwaj has also advised the same thing to Bharat in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3 and 8 that precede Doha no. 207.]

चौ०. अवसि नरेस बचन फुर करहू । पालहु प्रजा सोकु परिहरहू ॥ १ ॥
सुरपुर नृपु पाइहि परितोषू । तुम्ह कहूँ सुकृतु सुजसु नहिं दोषू ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

avasi narēsa bacana phura karahū. pālahu prajā sōku pariharahū. 1.
surapura nr̥pu pā'ihī paritōṣū. tumha kahum̐ sukṛtu sujasu nahim̐ dōṣū. 2.

Sage Vasistha exhorted Bharat: 'You must definitely fulfill the words of the king (your father, Dasrath) by (accepting the crown and) gladly taking care of the subjects (of the kingdom of Ayodhya), and stop feeling remorseful, guilty or sorry'¹. (1)

This would, on the one hand, give satisfaction to the king in his present abode in the heaven, and on the other hand, it would bring great merit to you for doing the right thing by honouring your father's words, as well as ensuring that the helpless citizens are comforted and well looked after². (2)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-5 that precede Doha no. 174 herein above.

²Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 174 herein above.

By repeating the same advice once again in the present verses we read here, sage Vasistha wished to impress upon Bharat that this is the best path for him to follow, and he should have no second thoughts about it. In the verses that follow herein below, the sage continues to emphasise the point that Bharat ought not to feel reluctant in accepting the crown and taking over the administration of the kingdom, as it would be in accordance with established norms and everyone would approve of it.]

बेद बिदित संमत सबही का । जेहि पितु देइ सो पावइ टीका ॥ ३ ॥
करहु राजु परिहरहु गलानी । मानहु मोर बचन हित जानी ॥ ४ ॥

bēda bidita sammata sabahī kā. jēhi pitu dē'i sō pāva'i ṭikā. 3.
karahu rāju pariharahu galānī. mānahu mōra bacana hita jānī. 4.

It is endorsed by the Vedas (ancient scriptures) and is also the unanimous view of everyone else (such as the courtiers, ministers, senior members of the society, and other wise ones) that he whom the father wishes to anoint as his successor gets the right to his inheritance. (3)

You should take over the reigns of the kingdom and discard a sense of guilt. Obey my words for they are in your interest.¹ (4)

[Note—¹Sage Vasistha is very diplomatic here. On the face he appears to be asking Bharat to accept the crown, but there is a subtle hint that the real inheritor of the crown is Lord Ram, and not Bharat. Why so?

Let us not forget that king Dasrath had wanted to hand over the crown and the inheritance of the kingdom to Lord Ram, and he had expressed this in no uncertain terms to Vasistha himself as is absolutely clear in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 3—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 4.

As for everyone endorsing this view, we have ample proof of it in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 1; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 3; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 5; (iv) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 7; (v) Doha no. 8.

It is therefore clear that the true wish of the king was to make his eldest son Lord Ram as the next king after him, and the process of anointing the Lord on the throne had already been initiated and preparations for the ceremony were underway in full swing—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 5—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 7.

It was also not secret that Bharat was being given the crown by the king under duress and threat of committing suicide by his wicked queen, Kaikeyi—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 28—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 29; and (ii) Doha no. 33.

This simply and obviously means that it was not the wish of the king that Bharat should ascend the throne by by-passing Lord Ram. So therefore, sage Vasistha indirectly told Bharat that he would be wrong to accept the crown which his father actually wished to give to his elder brother, Lord Ram, but was trapped by his mother, Kaikeyi, who forced the king to disinherit the Lord and give the crown to Bharat instead. To wit, if Bharat did accept the crown, he would be violating the wish of his father, which would mean he would fall foul of the views of the Vedas regarding inheritance of the crown, as well as public opinion that was against him.

Perhaps sage Vasistha wished to test Bharat's character, and how wise and intelligent he was. To Bharat's credit it must be said at this juncture that he immediately got the clue, and instantly decided that he won't accept the crown. Bharat also felt that all these entreaties of sage Vasistha, mother Kaushalya and other senior advisors to him to accept the crown were made just to maintain calm and order in the kingdom, because since Lord Ram would not come back before the end of fourteen years, there would be utter chaos due to a vacant throne and lack of an Authority to run the administrative affairs of the kingdom. If this fluid situation is allowed to linger, there was a danger of enemies attacking the kingdom. So, Bharat concluded, that this is why everyone was in favour of him accepting the crown, but if people were asked to tell honestly and under oath if they actually endorsed his ascension to the throne, the unanimous answer would be 'no'.

Say then, pondered Bharat, how can he expect loyalty, honest advice, allegiance and obedience from a population that is primarily against his accepting the crown. The only way to bring the public opinion in his favour was to reject the offer of the crown, and instead declare openly that it rightly belonged to Lord Ram and not to him, and so therefore, he won't ascend the throne. We shall read shortly exactly this thing and its positive outcome.

Bharat, therefore, did not go against the norms laid down in the Vedas regarding inheritance when he declined the crown, saying it belonged to Lord Ram. At the same time, he did not disobey his guru sage Vasistha by refusing to accept the crown, because Vasistha had himself cited the Vedas to say that "one whom the father wants should be his heir", and everyone knew that in this particular case king Dasrath wanted Lord Ram to be his heir.

So we find that this clever statement of sage Vasistha was meant, one, to test Bharat's character, and two, to give him a chance to wriggle out of the predicament and the sticky situation that he faced.

As we progress with the story we shall read that sage Bharadwaj has said almost similar things as sage Vasistha tells Bharat now—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 206—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 210.]

सुनि सुखु लहब राम बैदेहीं । अनुचित कहब न पंडित केहीं ॥ ५ ॥
कौसल्यादि सकल महतारीं । तेउ प्रजा सुख होहिं सुखारीं ॥ ६ ॥

sunī sukhu lahaba rāma baidēhīm. anucita kahaba na paṇḍita kēhīm. 5.
kausalyādi sakala mahatārīm. tē'u prajā sukha hōhīm sukhārīm. 6.

When Lord Ram and Sita hears about it (that you have ascended the throne and accepted the crown), they too will feel happy¹. Even the Pundits (learned people) would not call this action of yours as being unrighteous or improper. (5)

[Note—¹In this context, refer to Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 42 where we read that Lord Ram has expressed his happiness that Bharat would get the crown.

That said, what did sage Vasistha mean here by saying that the news of Bharat accepting the crown would make Lord Ram and Sita happy in the forest? The sage meant that when they hear that by Bharat accepting the crown peace and order has been restored in Ayodhya, and the kingdom is well looked after, they will surely feel relaxed and happy. On the other hand, if Bharat refuses, there will be total confusion and the administrative machinery of the kingdom would grind to a halt. This situation would definitely not give happiness to Lord Ram when he hears about it. If this happens, then surely Lord Ram would be annoyed with Bharat that he hadn't done his duty properly.]

परम तुम्हारे राम कर जानिहि । सो सब बिधि तुम्ह सन भल मानिहि ॥ ७ ॥
सौंपेहु राजु राम के आएँ । सेवा करेहु सनेह सुहाएँ ॥ ८ ॥

parama tumhāra rāma kara jānihi. sō saba bidhi tumha sana bhala mānihi. 7.
saumpēhu rāju rāma kē ā'ēm̐. sēvā karēhu sanēha suhā'ēm̐. 8.

Anyone who knows the supreme affection that exists between you and Lord Ram would not at all mind it (your accepting the crown in the absence of the Lord). All such people will be kindly indisposed towards you (that you have done the right thing, and that by accepting the crown you mean no insult to Lord Ram, nor are you usurping the Lord's right of inheritance, because this is an emergency situation). (7)

When Lord Ram comes back, hand over the reins of the kingdom to him, and serve him diligently and with due affection as is your natural desire. [But at present accept the crown.]¹ (8)

[Note—¹Once again, Bharat smelt a trap. Sage Vasistha tells him that “all such people who know that you have deep and true affection for Lord Ram would not misunderstand your accepting the crown in the absence of the Lord; they won't mind it”, but what about the rest of the population of Ayodhya who are not aware of it, or who see a hidden hand of Bharat in Lord Ram going to the forest? How can Bharat be certain that each single individual of Ayodhya knows how much he loves Lord Ram, and vice versa, that everyone endorses his ascension to the throne, that he is accepting the crown only under compulsion, and that too only for the interim period while the Lord is in the forest, for as soon as the Lord returns he would voluntarily step down and hand over the crown to the Lord? It's a great risk to take everyone for granted.

Bharat had already experienced that the mass of public opinion was not in his favour by the sort of cool reception and the cold shoulder he got from everyone he met upon his return to Ayodhya. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 158—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 159.}

So he decided that he will not become prey to such soothing words which are meant to comfort him and tide over the emergency situation, but would send a wrong signal throughout the rank and file of the kingdom. Say, who will know what had transpired during the close-door meeting in the royal court attended by only a select group of people, that it was sage Vasistha who was insisting that Bharat accept the crown, and that Bharat had to accept it for the fear of disobeying his guru? Once he accepts to ascend the throne, and the news went wild, people would think that Bharat had succeeded in his plans to grab the kingdom. Not a single person would believe that he was actually very reluctant, but had to accept it because of the sage's insistence. Who will believe that Bharat would gladly hand over the kingdom to Lord Ram when he returns home, and serve him willingly thereafter, once he has tasted the power, the authority, the privileges, the honours, the pleasures and the comforts that come to a king who is in power?

Besides this, Bharat himself did not want to take a grave risk, for the effects of authority and powers are very intoxicating, and fourteen years are a sufficiently long period time to allow this intoxication to take a firm hold on a person, so much so that Bharat feared that at the end of the period his mind may become polluted and he might be reluctant to hand over the charge to his elder brother. So therefore, it is better for him to remain clean from the very beginning itself, and not to get involved in this quagmire, because if the things went sour, all blame would be his, and then all the advisors who are now plying him with so many entreaties would not come to his rescue to share the blame.]

दो०. कीजिअ गुर आयसु अवसि कहहिं सचिव कर जोरि ।
रघुपति आएँ उचित जस तस तब करब बहोरि ॥ १७५ ॥
dōhā.

kīji'a gura āyasu avasi kahahim saciva kara jōri.
raghupati ā'ēm' ucita jasa tasa taba karaba bahōri. 175.

The ministers joined their respective palms as a gesture of submission and exhorted Bharat as follows: 'You must do as advised by your guru, sage Vasistha.

When Lord Ram (raghupati) comes back, whatever is fit and proper to be done at that time would be done.*

[*This last line can be read as follows also: When Lord Ram comes back, at that time you can do whatever if fit and proper for you to do.]¹ (Doha no. 175)

[Note—¹This cryptic and brief advice of the ministers sent alarm bells ringing in Bharat's mind. What do they mean; what are they hinting at? It was obvious to Bharat that the ministers were asking him to accept the crown because the chief priest of the kingdom and the family's guru, sage Vasistha, says so. But it did not mean that the ministers also want it—for they have added an unwanted rider by saying "when Lord Ram comes back, you can do whatever is fit at that time". What do they mean? Do they have doubts about his integrity and honesty; do they doubt that he loves Lord Ram and would surely hand over the crown to his elder brother when he returns home?

Bharat had no doubt that his suspicion was correct—that except the guru, there is hardly anyone who willingly would want him to ascend the throne. These ministers

and others are simply being courteous, and wish to be in good looks of Bharat in case he decides to accept the crown, for they don't want to give the impression that his accepting the crown is not liked by them as it would be against their own selfish interests if the reigning king feels that such and such person was against his ascension.

The guru was fully confident of Bharat's sincerity and love for Lord Ram as is evident in his emphatic endorsement of his ascension to the throne, for sage Vasistha knew that when Lord Ram comes back, Bharat would cheerfully hand over the kingdom to the Lord. But this confidence was not shared by others, such as the ministers in this case, and they have made their reservations clear by employing diplomatic language in what they have said.

There is another way at looking at this doubt in the ministers' minds in what would be done at the time Lord Ram returns. It is quite possible that if Bharat rules the kingdom properly, keeps the subjects happy and well provided for, if during his reign there is prosperity and enhancement of happiness, if the administration of the kingdom is run smoothly and better than it was done in the past, then it could be that Lord Ram himself would ask him to continue on the throne.

There were chances that the subjects would also accept Bharat as their ruler after fourteen long years of good governance under him, and so when Lord Ram returns and observes that the people are in favour of Bharat, he may quietly retire somewhere else on some excuse and let Bharat continue as the king.

There were also chances that after fourteen long years in the forest, living like a hermit, Lord Ram would lose all inclination to become a king if he did return, or he might not come back at all. After such a long time, the Lord may be out of tune with routine affairs of the state, and things might be very different at that time from what he had known when he left Ayodhya fourteen years ago.

To wit, nothing can be said with certainty what would happen at that time fourteen years hence, so the ministers left all options open to Bharat to do as would be fit and proper at the time Lord Ram comes back. Being ministers of a great kingdom, their prime objective were to ensure smooth functioning of the administrative machinery and affairs of the realm, welfare of the people and their prosperity. Therefore their advice to Bharat was in line with their duties and responsibilities in this respect.]

चौ०. कौसल्या धरि धीरजु कहई । पूत पथ्य गुर आयसु अहई ॥ १ ॥

सो आदरिअ करिअ हित मानी । तजिअ बिषादु काल गति जानी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kausalyā dhari dhīraju kaha'ī. pūta pathya gura āyasu aha'ī. 1.

sō ādari'a kari'a hita mānī. taji'a biṣādu kāla gati jānī. 2.

Mother Kaushalya showed patience and forbearance when she said to Bharat: 'My son (pūta), a guru's (i.e. a teacher's and a moral guide's) orders (or advice) are like the proper food that a doctor advises a patient when the latter is ill ("pathya"—because the doctor is the best person to decide what food is good for his patient vis-à-vis the disease from which the latter suffers, and therefore the patient will benefit if he obeys the advice of the doctor). (1)

Hence, you must respect your guru's advice as it is meant for your best of interests. So, you must desist from grieving and feeling remorseful by keeping in mind that the time is not proper for it, and that every misfortune that has happened is due to the adverse effect of a time that is not in our favour¹. (2)

[Note—¹This is what the guru, sage Vasistha, has advised Bharat just a while ago, in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 174; (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precede Doha no. 175.

Even the chief minister and other courtiers had advised Bharat to follow the guru's instructions in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 175.

When mother Kaushalya observed that everyone in the assembly had endorsed what sage Vasistha had advised Bharat, she decided to follow the general opinion of others so that there is harmony and peace in the kingdom, and no one gets the wrong signal that there is discord or dissension in the royal family and the court with regard to Bharat's ascension to the throne. That would be disastrous for law and order and peace in the kingdom which was already reeling under the dark clouds of uncertainty and gloom. Mother Kaushalya's endorsement of sage Vasistha's advice given to Bharat would make it clear to everyone that there is no rift or tension within the royal family, and that the whole family is united and supportive of each other.

Kaushalya's advice to Bharat was also a means to remove any doubts in his mind as to what she might be thinking of him since her own son, Lord Ram, who was to get the throne, had been debarred from it because of Bharat. Now Bharat was certain that Kaushalya loved him as much as she loved Lord Ram, and therefore it is his duty now to reciprocate the same sentiments that she has for him, i.e. to show her the same respect and affection as Lord Ram had been showing her.

Her advice also sent a positive signal to the subjects of the kingdom who would now onwards treat queen Kaushalya with great respect for being a noble and wise lady who had a broad heart, and was definitely not like her sister-queen Kaikeyi who was very selfish, evil and wicked.]

बन रघुपति सुरपति नरनाहू । तुम्ह एहि भाँति तात कदराहू ॥ ३ ॥

परिजन प्रजा सचिव सब अंबा । तुम्हही सुत सब कहँ अवलंबा ॥ ४ ॥

bana raghupati surapati naranāhū. tumha ēhi bhām̐ti tāta kadarāhū. 3.

parijana prajā saciva saba ambā. tumhahī suta saba kaham̐ avalambā. 4.

Lord Ram ("raghupati", the Lord of the family of king Raghu) is in the forest, and the King ("naranāhū", i.e. Dasrath) has gone to the abode of the gods in heaven (i.e. he has died). My son (tāta), in such a precarious situation (when everything is hanging in a balance) you are behaving as if you are very feeble and faint-hearted, when you should be bold and courageous. (3)

My dear son (suta), come to think of it, everyone here, such as your kinsmen, the subjects of the kingdom, the ministers and courtiers, as well as your mothers (Kaushalya and Sumitra)—there are all looking at you for providing them with support and comfort; they expect that you give them solace and succour in this testing time, and here you are grieving and lamenting like a weak person who has no knee even to support himself, or a person with a weak spine who cannot face adversities

and lend support to those who depend upon him. Surely, this weakness definitely does not behoove of you, for everyone expects you to be courageous, bold, resilient, patient, wise and prudent¹. (4)

[Note—¹Kaushalya told Bharat: “My dear son, gather thy wits together, have courage and show true mettle. Shun grieving, feeling sad, and becoming unduly emotional. Thou art grown up and a great prince, and so don’t lament and behave like a child. This is the time when thou art to hold the reins of the kingdom and step in the shoes of a commander of a ship to see that it is skillfully and safely driven to the shore during stormy weather and a violent sea that is ready to capsize the ship and devour everything on board. Remember how sad and let-down and sorry your beloved brother Lord Ram wouldst feel when he learns that thou havest failed to honour thine responsibilities towards the subjects of the kingdom and everyone else who depend upon thee for everything now. So therefore, come on son, be bold and courageous, show resilience and patience, and take charge.”] (4)

लखि बिधि बाम कालु कठिनाई । धीरजु धरहु मातु बलि जाई ॥ ५ ॥
सिर धरि गुर आयसु अनुसरहू । प्रजा पालि परिजन दुखु हरहू ॥ ६ ॥

lakhi bidhi bāma kālu kaṭhinā'ī. dhīrajū dharahu mātu bali jā'ī. 5.
sira dhari gura āyasu anusarahū. prajā pāli parijana dukhu harahū. 6.

[Kaushalya continued to request Bharat to follow the instructions of sage Vasistha and honour his advice by agreeing to accept the crown and rule the kingdom in the absence of Lord Ram so that the welfare of all the people can be taken care of, and anarchy and uncertainty can be dispelled. She therefore concluded by telling Bharat—
]

‘Thy mother exhorts thee to have patience and courage during this testing time of adversity and misfortune when the Creator seems not in our favour (for it is obvious that he is antagonized with us, otherwise he wouldn’t have allowed things to come to such a sorry and pitiable state as they have actually been). (5)

I reiterate once again that thou ought to follow thy guru’s (sage Vasistha’s) advice¹ by bowing thine head in reverence and obedience to him, and thou shouldst live upto thine responsibilities and moral duties to take care of the welfare of the subjects of the kingdom so that their troubles and worries come to an end (and peace and order can be maintained in the realm).’ (6)

[Note—¹Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 176 herein above.

And, what was the guru’s advice? Briefly it was that Bharat should act as a care-taker ruler or a governor acting on behalf of Lord Ram to look after the routine day-to-day affairs of the kingdom to ensure that neither the people nor the working of the administrative machinery suffers while the Lord was away in the forest, and when the Lord comes back, Bharat should hand over the charge of the kingdom to him—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 174; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1 and 8 that precede Doha no. 175.]

गुर के बचन सचिव अभिनंदनु । सुने भरत हिय हित जनु चंदनु ॥ ७ ॥
सुनी बहोरि मातु मृदु बानी । सील सनेह सरल रस सानी ॥ ८ ॥

gura kē bacana saciva abhinandanu. sunē bharata hiya hita janu candanu. 7.
sunī bahōri mātu mṛdu bānī. sīla sanēha sarala rasa sānī. 8.

Bharat patiently heard his guru's advice¹ that was also endorsed by the ministers².

Their advice was very reassuring, soothing and comforting for Bharat's troubled and tormented heart as if a paste of sandalwood (which is inherently cool) had been applied on the wounds that afflicted him³. (7)

Bharat's sense of ease and comfort was further reinforced when he heard the reassuring words of mother Kaushalya⁴, words that were kind, sweet and encouraging, and spoken affectionately⁵. (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 174—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 175.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no.175.

³Bharat was initially very upset and perturbed because he thought that everyone believes he is malicious and crooked, and that he had a secret hand behind the conspiracy that was hatched by his wicked mother which led to Lord Ram being banished to the forest. Bharat, who was absolutely innocent and upright, was at a loss to know as to how he would redeem his honour and prove his innocence before the people. So, when he discovered that mother Kaushalya, guru sage Vasistha and all the ministers were kindly disposed towards him, that they harboured no suspicion for him, Bharat felt very relieved as if a great burden had been taken off his conscience.

Now we shall read shortly that Bharat reinforced his position in the hearts everyone as an honest and righteous person, who deserves respect for himself, when he declared that inspite of everything and all the well-intentioned advice given to him by one and all, the crown does not belong to him, for it rightfully belongs to Lord Ram, that he will not touch it for even a moment, and that he sees no other way out but to go to Lord Ram and ask him for forgiveness, as well as to pray to the Lord to come back and accept the crown which rightfully is his.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 176 herein above.

⁵In his first meeting with Kaushalya after returning to Ayodhya, Bharat had sensed, from the warm and loving reception that he had got from her, that she had no love lost for him, that she continued to treat him with the same love and affection that she had for him earlier, treating him in the same way as she would have treated her own son, Lord Ram.

In this context, refer specifically to the following verses of Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand: (i) Doha no. 164 along with Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes it; (ii)

Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 165; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 167; (iv) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 169.]

छं०. सानी सरल रस मातु बानी सुनि भरतु व्याकुल भए । १ ।
लोचन सरोरुह स्रवत सींचत बिरह उर अंकुर नए ॥ २ ॥
सो दसा देखत समय तेहि बिसरी सबहि सुधि देह की । ३ ।
तुलसी सराहत सकल सादर सीवँ सहज सनेह की ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

sānī sarala rasa mātu bānī suni bharatu byākula bha'ē. 1.
lōcana sarōruha sravata sīncata biraha ura ānkura na'ē. 2.
sō dasā dēkhata samaya tēhi bisarī sabahi sudhi dēha kī. 3.
tulasī sarāhata sakala sādara sīvam' sahaja sanēha kī. 4.

When Bharat heard the simple and sincere advice of mother Kaushalya, he felt very distressed in his heart¹. (Chanda line no. 1)

Tears welled-up in his lotus-like eyes and flowed out in streams as if the seeds of grief and pain of separation from Lord Ram that were present in his heart were being watered by these tears². (Chanda line no. 2)

When those present on the occasion saw Bharat's condition, all of them empathized with him and shared his sense of sadness, grief and pain, for everyone was overwhelmed with emotions similar to those of Bharat. (Chanda line no. 3)

Tulsidas says that at that moment everyone developed great respect for Bharat, praising him for his exemplary virtues and excellence of character³. (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹Why did Bharat feel distressed and restless in his heart when he heard mother Kaushalya tell him to accept the crown? It was because he looked closely into her eyes and quietly observed that they were wet with suppressed tears. He also perceived that her voice betrayed the state of her mind and emotions, giving him a clue that she was not interested, nonchalant and indifferent. She endorsed sage Vasistha's words because she did not want to create a controversy and send a wrong signal to the citizens that she was friction, dissension and displeasure in the royal family regarding Bharat's accepting the crown. Kaushalya knew how delicate the situation was, that it was the time to show solidarity and unity so that peace, calmness and rule of law could be maintained in the kingdom, for a slight hint to the contrary would unleash chaos and prove catastrophic for the kingdom.

Bharat realized the pang of pain and grief in Kaushalya's heart—for if things had gone right she would have been presiding over the momentous event of anointment of her son, Lord Ram, to the throne, but now her son was in the forest, and she was not even sure she would see him again. Her agony was further exacerbated because her husband, king Dasrath, had died. For all this misfortune, Bharat held himself responsible, and therefore it hurt him to think that it was such an irony of fate that she had to calmly endorse Bharat's anointment on the throne which rightly

belonged to her own son, Lord Ram, and that she has calmly accepted the cruel fiat of fate and the dictates of equally cruel destiny without any anger, revulsion or ill-will.

To wit, though Bharat knew by now that mother Kaushalya had no doubts about his integrity, that she loved him no less than she loved Lord Ram, but what pained him much was the sadness, grief, helplessness and poignancy that were so evident on her face.

This is why tears welled up in the eyes of Bharat too.

²For a brief moment Bharat had felt comforted (refer Chaupai line no. 7 herein above), but when he glanced at mother Kaushalya, sadness and grief once again got the better of him as he began to weep.

³Bharat captured the heart of everyone present in the royal assembly; the tears in his eyes and the sad expression of grief on his face established his innocence beyond doubt, which in turn endeared him to all.

They praised Bharat's character and virtues—that he was beyond reproach, that he was the opposite of what his mother Kaikeyi was, that he was innocent and honest, that he had lived upto this reputation of being loyal to Lord Ram, that he was sensitive and caring as he was evident by his spontaneous reaction when he observed the sad condition of mother Kaushalya.

His tears proved to everyone that the proposal made to him to accept the reins of the kingdom had hurt him very much, that he would not agree to it for he believed that the crown rightfully belonged to Lord Ram. Nothing more was wanted and no more proof was needed, for whatever doubts that there were in the minds of the people regarding Bharat's integrity and innocence were immediately removed, and he became a 'my dear' of everyone.]

सो०. भरतु कमल कर जोरि धीर धुरंधर धीर धरि।

बचन अमिअँ जनु बोरि देत उचित उत्तर सबहि ॥ १७६ ॥

sōraṭhā.

bharatu kamala kara jōri dhīra dhurandhara dhīra dhari.
bacana ami'am'janu bōri dēta ucita utara sabahi. 176.

[In the verses that follow, we shall be reading Bharat's response to the proposal made to him to accept the crown of Ayodhya.]

Bharat joined the palms of his lotus-like hands, gathered his wits, patience and courage together to show exemplary steadfastness of resolution and determination of mind when he spoke politely, but firmly, to give an appropriate answer that would address everyone's suggestions and queries¹. (Doha no. 176)

[Note—¹What Bharat would say now would address two important questions: One, what his decision was regarding acceptance of the crown of Ayodhya; and two, how he plans to carry forward his relationship with Lord Ram.

So, as soon as he began to speak, everyone listened to him in rapt attention; all eyes and ears were riveted on him as if time had come to a standstill during those moments, because the future of Ayodhya was to be decided then.]

[PAUSE 18 FOR A THIRTY-DAY RECITATION]

चौ०. मोहि उपदेसु दीन्ह गुर नीका । प्रजा सचिव संमत सबही का ॥ १ ॥
 मातु उचित धरि आयसु दीन्हा । अवसि सीस धरि चाहउँ कीन्हा ॥ २ ॥
 caupā'ī.

mōhi upadēsu dīnha gura nīkā. prajā saciva sammata sabahī kā. 1.
 mātu ucita dhari āyasu dīnhā. avasi sīsa dhari cāha'um' kīnhā. 2.

Bharat said: 'My guru (sage Vasistha) had advised what would seemingly be good for me. And his views are endorsed by the citizens and all the ministers of the kingdom. (1)

My mother (Kaushalya) too endorsed that advice as she considered it to be appropriate for the occasion.

I also would like to obey it with a bowed head and due reverence. (2)

गुर पितु मातु स्वामि हित बानी । सुनि मन मुदित करिअ भलि जानी ॥ ३ ॥
 उचित कि अनुचित किऐँ बिचारू । धरमु जाइ सिर पातक भारू ॥ ४ ॥

gura pitu mātu svāmi hita bānī. suni mana mudita kari'a bhali jānī. 3.
 ucita ki anucita ki'ēm' bicārū. dharamu jā'i sira pātaka bhārū. 4.

I am also aware of the principle that one must cheerfully obey the words (orders, instructions, advice) of one's guru, father, mother and lord as what they say is meant for one's own good. (3)

One must obey such instructions without a second thought, without trying to analyse whether such orders are proper or not, for not to obey them (i.e. to hesitate or dither in carrying out such orders forthwith) would mean that one has failed in doing one's duty, which in turn incurs infamy, and accumulates a load of sin for the person concerned. (4)

तुम्ह तौ देहु सरल सिख सोई । जो आचरत मोर भल होई ॥ ५ ॥
 जद्यपि यह समुझत हउँ नीकें । तदपि होत परितोषु न जी कें ॥ ६ ॥

tumha tau dēhu sarala sikha sō'ī. jō ācarata mōra bhala hō'ī. 5.
 jadyapi yaha samujhata ha'um' nīkēm. tadapi hōta paritōṣu na jī kēm. 6.

[Turning to sage Vasistha, his chief minister, other courtiers, and mother Kaushalya, Bharat said—] ‘Indeed, what you have advised me is truly for my good and welfare, and by following your instructions I will be the gainer in all possible ways.

[To wit, I will gain in every imaginable way, for I will get the crown, I will become a king, Lord Ram would feel happy that I fulfilled my duties towards the subjects of the kingdom and kept the administrative machinery running in order, I will be honouring king Dasrath’s words, and so on and so forth. In brief, I will be called obedient, prudent, diligent, and a follower of rules.] (5)

But though I fully understand the import of accepting your advice and the gains that would come to me, yet my heart is not satisfied and it does not agree with it.

[To wit, my conscience fails to support me if I think of carrying out your instructions, and my heart does not support me when I ponder over the matter of obeying the advice that you have given me. My mind too refuses to oblige me. Indeed, I feel very uneasy, and I am unable to overcome a sense of guilt and remorse that have overwhelmed me.] (6)

अब तुम्ह बिनय मोरि सुनि लेहू । मोहि अनुहरत सिखावनु देहू ॥ ७ ॥
ऊतरु देउँ छमब अपराधू । दुखित दोष गुन गनहिं न साधू ॥ ८ ॥

aba tumha binaya mōri suni lēhū. mōhi anuharata sikhāvanu dēhū. 7.
ūtaru dē’um̐ chamaba aparādha ū. dukhita dōṣa guna ganahim̐ na sādū. 8.

Now, please be kind to listen to my humble prayers first, and then advise me accordingly. (7)

I beg of you to kindly excuse and forgive me for having the boldness and the temerity to answer you on your face (by questioning the wisdom of your advice instead of obediently following it)—for those who are wise, saintly and intelligent do not pay heed to the actions and words of a person who is mentally upset and suffers from agony of the heart due to some kind of severe emotional distress that has undermined his peace and created an obstruction in his rational behaviour¹.

[To wit, I am now under immense emotional stress; my heart and mind are not at peace, for I am extremely distressed and agonized. In this condition, it may be possible that my words and behaviour might be incorrect and improper, for in such agitated state of the mind and heart a person is not expected to think rightly and act properly. So therefore, I beg of everyone present here to kindly forgive me for my impertinence and irreverent behaviour, that I am questioning the propriety of the advice given to me regarding acceptance of the crown, and that I am not obeying it forthwith by bowing my head in obedience and submission.] (8)

[Note—¹The idea that when a person is under immense emotional stress, his mind does not work properly, and his words and actions are driven more by his emotions rather than by rational thoughts, has been reiterated elsewhere in Ram Charit Manas also. For instance, refer to: Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 258; (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 300.]

दो०. पितु सुरपुर सिय रामु बन करन कहहु मोहि राजु ।
एहि तें जानहु मोर हित कै आपन बड़ काजु ॥ १७७ ॥

dōhā.

pitu surapura siya rāmu bana karana kahahu mōhi rāju.
ēhi tēm jānahu mōra hita kai āpana baṛa kāju. 177.

‘My father has gone to the heaven (i.e. he has died), and Lord Ram and Sita have gone to the forest. In this backdrop, it is indeed so preposterous a thought that you are asking me accept the crown and rule over the kingdom.

Tell me truly and honestly: what do you mean to achieve by the advice you have given me? Is it sincerely meant for my personal good and welfare, or is it meant to fulfill your wider needs of politics and governance (because the throne cannot be left vacant, and there is the urgent need to put someone in charge of the affairs of the kingdom in order to avoid chaos and anarchy)?’¹ (Doha no. 177)

[Note—¹Bharat is very blunt and bold and straightforward here. He has hit the nail directly on its head by not mincing words, not using diplomatic language where a statement can be interpreted in different ways, not beating around the bush but coming out straightforward with what he thinks. His sharp retort amply hinted to all those who were present there that it is not easy to trap Bharat and make him change his mind.

During this deliberation, Bharat will make it clear that his true welfare and good was in serving Lord Ram which his wicked mother has snatched from him. He says that he has thought over this issue deeply and come to the conclusion that his welfare and good lies nowhere else, in no other thing except in serving the Lord. He says—]

चौ०. हित हमार सियपति सेवकाई । सो हरि लीन्ह मातु कुटिलाई ॥ १ ॥
मैं अनुमानि दीख मन माहीं । आन उपायँ मोर हित नाही ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

hita hamāra siyapati sēvakā’īm. sō hari līnha mātu kuṭilā’īm. 1.
mair̥ anumāni dīkha mana māhīm. āna upāyam̐ mōra hita nāhīm. 2.

Bharat declared: ‘My real good and true welfare lies in being able to serve Lord Ram (“siyapati”—literally, the husband of Sita), but most unfortunately this has been snatched by the wickedness of my mother. (1)

Verily indeed, I have pondered and thought over the matter in my mind and concluded that there is no other way by which my welfare and good can be had. (2)

सोक समाजु राजु केहि लेखें । लखन राम सिय बिनु पद देखें ॥ ३ ॥
बादि बसन बिनु भूषन भारू । बादि बिरति बिनु ब्रह्म बिचारू ॥ ४ ॥

sōka samāju rāju kēhi lēkhēm. lakhana rāma siya binu pada dēkhēm. 3.
bādi basana binu bhūṣana bhārū. bādi birati binu brahma bicārū. 4.

This kingdom is indeed nothing but a bundle of sorrows and grief if one is not able to see the feet of Laxman, Lord Ram and Sita here. (3)

If there are no clothes for a person to wear, of what use are many ornaments for him, for they are merely a burden for a naked body.

If one has no sense of renunciation, dispassion and detachment towards this material world that is gross and mortal, then say what is the use of him talking about Brahm (the cosmic Consciousness and its realization), about enlightenment and true wisdom, for it would be a hollow talk and worth nothing. (4)

[Note—Bharat gives some instances to stress that real happiness can come to Ayodhya only when Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman come home.

In the first instance, it would look so ridiculous if a naked man adorns himself with all sorts of costly ornaments but says he has no money to buy clothes.

In the second instance, it would make no sense for a man preaching about Brahm and the need for practicing the spiritual virtues of renunciation, detachment and dispassion to others while he himself is neck-deep in worldly affairs, while he is engrossed in self gratification and is attached to the world and its sense objects as if he is stuck with them with a glue.]

सरुज सरीर बादि बहु भोगा । बिनु हरिभगति जायँ जप जोगा ॥ ५ ॥
जायँ जीव बिनु देह सुहाई । बादि मोर सबु बिनु रघुराई ॥ ६ ॥

saruja sarīra bādi bahu bhōgā. binu haribhagati jāyam̐ japa jōgā. 5.
jāyam̐ jīva binu dēha suhāī. bādi mōra sabu binu raghurāī. 6.

Without a healthy body, all things of physical comfort are useless.

Without having devotion for Lord Hari (God), all sorts of religious practices such as Japa (repetition of holy name of the Lord) and Yoga (meditation) are useless. (5)

Without life there is no use of anyone's body, no matter how attractive and handsome it may be.

In the same way, everything is secondary for me and have no value or importance for me in the absence of Lord Ram. (6)

[Note—Bharat gives three more examples here. One is of a healthy body without which no one can enjoy any kind of material comfort. The second is the virtue of devotion or 'Bhakti' without which all other methods to attain peace and deliverance are useless. The third is the importance of life in a body, for no one would appreciate a dead body however handsome it may have been when the person was alive.

Concluding, Bharat says that as far as he is concerned, everything is secondary, immaterial, irrelevant and unimportant when compared to Lord Ram.]

जाउँ राम पहिं आयसु देहू । एकहिं आँक मोर हित एहू ॥ ७ ॥
मोहि नृप करि भल आपन चहहू । सोउ सनेह जड़ता बस कहहू ॥ ८ ॥

jā'um̐ rāma pahim̐ āyasu dēhū. ēkahim̐ āmkā mōra hita ēhū. 7.
mōhi nr̥pa kari bhala āpana cahahū. sō'u sanēha jaṛatā basa kahahū. 8.

Therefore, please give me permission so that I may go to where Lord Ram is, for it is the only way I see my good and welfare. (7)

You think that by making me a king you shall find some kind of welfare for yourselves, but you are being naïve, and it is nothing but your affection for me that has so much deluded you that you are committing the folly to think so¹. (8)

[Note—¹Bharat told the assembly: “You will not benefit by making me a king; I will be of no good for you. This means that even your own interests would not be served. As for me, I have already made it clear that my good and welfare lies with Lord Ram, and it can be achieved only when I go to meet him and bring him back.

Therefore, making me a king would serve no one’s interests, neither mine nor yours.”]

दो०. कैकेई सुअ कुटिलमति राम बिमुख गतलाज ।
तुम्ह चाहत सुखु मोहबस मोहि से अधम कें राज ॥ १७८ ॥
dōhā.

kaikē'i su'a kuṭilamati rāma bimukha gatalāja.
tumha cāhata sukhu mōhabasa mōhi sē adhama kēm rāja. 178.

Bharat argued: ‘Just think over the matter seriously. I am the son of Kaikeyi who is wicked, evil and crooked, as well as opposed to Lord Ram. Say, being her son, how is it possible that these negative traits are not in my blood?

Given this fact, how do you expect to have some kind of goodness and welfare under me if I am made a king, when I am a bundle of unholy characters and am most sinful?’¹ (Doha no. 178)

[Note—¹Bharat warned the assembly: “Tell me, if the king himself is sinful, how will the subjects under him live peacefully and happily? You are being misled by delusions; you are short-sighted because your immediate concern is to fill the vacant throne, but have you pondered and given serious thought about the long term consequences of making a sinful man a king, especially one whose mother is wicked, cunning, deceitful and evil. Say, tell me, what guarantee do you have that once I am a king and have all the powers in my hand then this wicked woman, whom the world calls my ‘mother’, would not act as an extra-constitutional authority and run amok, become a haughty tyrant who would unleash untold sufferings upon you and make you dance to her whim and fancy? Would you like it; do you want that to happen? I warn you, don’t blame me later on.”]

चौ०. कहउँ साँचु सब सुनि पतिआहू । चाहिअ धरमसील नरनाहू ॥ १ ॥
मोहि राजु हठि देइहहु जबहीं । रसा रसातल जाइहि तबहीं ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kaha'um̐ sām̐cu saba suni pati'āhū. cāhi'a dharamasīla naranāhū. 1.
mōhi rāju haṭhi dē'ihahu jabahīm. rasā rasātala jā'ihī tabahīm. 2.

Bharat continued: 'I tell you truly and honestly, and you must listen to me, that a ruler (such as a king) must be someone who is beyond reproach and stands on a firm ground of virtuousness that fulfills all criteria of Dharma. (1)

But I tell you honestly that if you insist to give the reins of the kingdom to me, and compel me to accept it, then everything on this earth would sink into the nether world, and all of you will be doomed¹. (2)

[Note—¹Bharat warned the assembly: "You know why by appointing me you will be committing a grave error of judgment? It is because I am a great sinner, one who has been the single cause of misery, grief, pain and distress to everyone in the kingdom, and one who became the reason why Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman had to go to the forest. Is this not known to you? So therefore, how can you expect to live in peace and prosperity under a king as detestable and contemptible as me? See, you are being emotional now, you are being driven by short-term objectives to make some ad hoc arrangement to run the routine affairs of the kingdom, but you don't take into account the long-term consequences of appointing a ruler who has a questionable background, whose antecedents are not too praiseworthy, and who will pull down the whole structure along with him when the burden of his sins would sink him into hell. It is no wisdom to seek short-term answers to a question that needs some enduring and long-term solution."

Bharat makes this point clear in the verses that follow herein below.]

मोहि समान को पाप निवासू । जेहि लागि सीय राम बनबासू ॥ ३ ॥
रायँ राम कहँ काननु दीन्हा । बिछुरत गमनु अमरपुर कीन्हा ॥ ४ ॥
मैं सठु सब अनरथ कर हेतू । बैठ बात सब सुनउँ सचेतू ॥ ५ ॥

mōhi samāna kō pāpa nivāsū. jēhi lagi sīya rāma banabāsū. 3.
rāyam̐ rāma kahum̐ kānanu dīnhā. bichurata gamanu amarapura kīnhā. 4.
mair̐ saṭhu saba anaratha kara hētū. baiṭha bāta saba suna'um̐ sacētū. 5.

Say, who has a greater treasury of sins than mine, who is a bigger sinner and a more unworthy person than me on whose account Lord Ram and Sita had to go to the forest for no fault of theirs?¹ (3)

Alas, it is on the account of my cursed self that the king (Dasrath) was compelled to send Lord Ram to the forest, and then, as a consequence of it, he himself went to the abode of the gods in heaven (i.e. he died)². (4)

I am the sole wicked person and the only cursed being who became the single cause of all misfortunes, for I am the root of all nuisances that took place here. And it is such a cruelty of fate that I am forced to sit and consciously hear all about it, albeit helplessly for I am unable to do anything to undo it³. (5)

[Note—¹Kaikeyi had wanted that her son Bharat should ascend the throne, and for this reason she demanded that his elder brother, Lord Ram, be banished to the forest so that the latter cannot create an obstacle in Bharat's anointment to the throne. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 29.

Bharat expresses a similar sentiment that shows how guilty and remorseful he feels that Lord Ram had been sent to the forest on his account during his meeting with sage Bharadwaj later on—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 211—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 212.

²Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 155 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it.

³Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 177.]

बिनु रघुबीर बिलोकि अबसू । रहे प्रान सहि जग उपहासू ॥ ६ ॥
 राम पुनीत बिषय रस रूखे । लोलुप भूमि भोग के भूखे ॥ ७ ॥
 कहँ लगि कहौँ हृदय कठिनाई । निदरि कुलिसु जेहिं लही बड़ाई ॥ ८ ॥

binu raghubīra bilōki abāsū. rahē prāna sahi jaga upahāsū. 6.
 rāma punīta biṣaya rasa rūkhē. lōlupa bhūmi bhōga kē bhūkhē. 7.
 kaham̐ lagi kahaur̐ hr̥daya kaṭhinā'ī. nidari kulisu jēhim̐ lahī baṛā'ī. 8.

I am so unfortunate and cursed that inspite of seeing a home without Lord Ram and Sita living in it, and inspite of being the object of scorn, contempt and condemnation in this world I have survived to listen to everything being said about me (instead of dying and finding peace for my tormented soul). (6)

Woe betide me and accursed is my life that it is devoid of the purity of affection for Lord Ram which it was expected to have, because instead of it, alas, I appear to be greedy for power and wealth, I appear to long for the pleasures and comforts of the sense objects of the material world. (7)

Say, how sufficiently can I narrate the pain and suffering that have troubled my heart, for it seems to be sterner and harsher than the hardest weapon in existence?

[To wit, my heart seems to have no emotions in it; it seems to be made of stone, for it seems not to be affected by the immense grief and pain that has overwhelmed everyone on my account. I should have been ashamed of myself that I did not hide my self in a pit dug into the earth, but boldly preferred to sit facing you, the courtiers and the ministers and my guru and my mother, in open court, without having my face blackened and hung in shame.]¹ (8)

[Note—¹Bharat's extreme sense of remorse, and the intensity of the pain and hurt of his heart is made clear by him to sage Bharadwaj too in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya

Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 211—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 212.]

दो०. कारन तें कारजु कठिन होइ दोसु नहिं मोर ।
कुलिस अस्थि तें उपल तें लोह कराल कठोर ॥ १७९ ॥

dōhā.

kārana tēm kāraju kaṭhina hō'i dōsu nahim mōra.
kulisa asthi tēm upala tēm lōha karāla kaṭhōra. 179.

As a general rule, the effect is harder than the cause¹, and I am not to be blamed for it.
See, the Vajra (the weapon of Indra) is harder than the bones from which it is made, and the iron is harder than the stone (or iron-ore) from which it is derived².
(Doha no. 179)

[Note—¹Bharat means that he understands that though he is the cause of all misery and troubles that have befallen upon Ayodhya and its citizens, he is not so cruel and wicked as it is made out to be, for internally he too is suffering from the effects of a cruel fate and an opposed Creator as much as others.

²Vajra is said to be the strongest weapon in existence. It was made from the bones of Dadhichi. Bones are definitely not as strong as diamond or iron. Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 30; (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 95.

Similarly, iron is derived from iron-ore that is mined from earth. The same earth has rocks on and under its surface, but the rock is not as strong as the iron, for if the rock is hit by an iron rod it would break into pieces, and it is not the other way round.]

चौ०. कैकेई भव तनु अनुरागे । पावँर प्राण अघाइ अभागे ॥ १ ॥
जौं प्रिय बिरहँ प्राण प्रिय लागे । देखब सुनब बहुत अब आगे ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kaikēī bhava tanu anurāgē. pāvam̐ra prāna aghā'i abhāgē. 1.
jaur̐m priya biraham̐ prāna priya lāgē. dēkhaba sunaba bahuta aba āgē. 2.

[Bharat is full of remorse and scornful on himself, regretting very much that he hasn't died but continues to live with a body that is so evil as to have been the cause of so much grief for everyone, as well as for Lord Ram going to the forest.]

Bharat continues: 'This cursed body of mine has been born from the womb of Kaikeyi, and I long for a life by clinging to it; how exceedingly unfortunate am I! (1)

If now I can find that such a life is worth living, a life which survived the storm of grief from separation from someone whom I love so much (a reference to Lord Ram),

then surely I must be ready to see much worse in the future, and remain unaffected by it¹.’ (2)

[Note—¹Says Bharat reproaching himself: “Alack-a-day, what worse could have happened to me that would have snuffed the life out of my wretched body? If I could survive the immensity of grief arising from separation from my beloved Lord Ram, if this was not enough to cause my life to exit my body, then I am quite certain that I can cling to life and continue to favour my gross body even in situations that would otherwise make others die, because there is no other torment and torture more grave and horrifying than the one already inflicted upon me when I am compelled to live without having the company of Lord Ram. It is just the beginning of the fourteen long years when I will be separated from the Lord, and during this short time I survived such horrifying developments as the death of my father, my mothers becoming widows, the subjects of the kingdom left grieving and wailing in the agony of separation from their beloved prince, the kingdom itself left in the lurch without a king, and a dark and uncertain future staring me in the face. This is just the beginning; god only knows what would happen during the long time of fourteen years, and if I could survive the present wound of my heart and the battering on my conscience, then I think no wound would be worse and no injury graver as to cause my death in the future too.”]

लखन राम सिय कहूँ बनू दीन्हा । पठइ अमरपुर पति हित कीन्हा ॥ ३ ॥
 लीन्ह बिधवपन अपजसु आपू । दीन्हेउ प्रजहि सोकु संतापू ॥ ४ ॥
 मोहि दीन्ह सुखु सुजसु सुराजू । कीन्ह कैकई सब कर काजू ॥ ५ ॥

lakhana rāma siya kahum̐ banu dīnhā. paṭha'i amarapura pati hita kīnhā. 3.
 līnha bidhavapana apajasu āpū. dīnhē'u prajahi sōku santāpū. 4.
 mōhi dīnha sukhu sujasu surājū. kīnha kaika'īm̐ saba kara kājū. 5.

Pouring scorn, disgust and ridicule at his mother Kaikeyi, Bharat lambasted her for what she had done, saying sarcastically: ‘She cared for the welfare of Laxman, Lord Ram and Sita by sending them to the forest, and she (Kaikeyi) has served her husband (king Dasrath) well by sending him too to the abode of gods in the heaven (by causing his death). (3)

She invited widowhood on herself, courted great infamy, and embraced ridicule and scorn from all quarters.

Not only this, she bestowed largesse in the form of immense grief and sorrows upon the subjects of the kingdom. (4)

Alas, the culmination of the irony is that she also bestowed upon me happiness, gave me good fame, and the great opportunity to rule a kingdom!

Verily indeed, Kaikeyi has served everyone well¹!! (5)

[Note—¹To wit, what more show of valour and courage and boldness can anyone expect from someone, for single-handedly Kaikeyi has pulled the rug from underneath everyone, and brought the whole edifice crashing down with a wise crack of her crooked mind and vile tongue. One whip of hers has spurred the horse of disaster and

ruin to gallop full steam ahead. Really, what a great planner, with a long term vision, is she, that with one giant step of her cunning mind and diabolic heart she seems to have settled the matter once and for all—for she has indeed made her mark in the annals of history by brushing aside all sense of propriety, probity, prudence, and the call of conscience, by having no regrets at being the cause of the death of her husband, of Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman going to the forest, of the kingdom and its subjects being made to suffer so intensely, and of putting me to shame so much that even death turned its face away from me. What more praise does she expect?]

एहि तें मोर काह अब नीका । तेहि पर देन कहहु तुम्ह टीका ॥ ६ ॥
 कैकड़ जठर जनमि जग माहीं । यह मोहि कहँ कछु अनुचित नाहीं ॥ ७ ॥
 मोरि बात सब बिधिहिं बनाई । प्रजा पाँच कत करहु सहाई ॥ ८ ॥

ēhi tēm mōra kāha aba nīkā. tēhi para dēna kahahu tumha ṭīkā. 6.
 kaika'i jaṭhara janami jaga māhīm. yaha mōhi kaham' kachu anucita nāhīm. 7.
 mōri bāta saba bidhihīm banā'ī. prajā pām'ca kata karahu sahā'ī. 8.

Bharat says sarcastically: 'Say, what better fate could be mine than that I already have in the context of what I have just said. [To wit, with Kaikeyi as my mother, with me being the cause of Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman going to the forest, with my father dying in grief, with the whole kingdom made to suffer due to me—what worse of a fate can one have?]

And, in spite of this, you wish to give me the right to rule the kingdom by anointing me on the throne. [So much harm has already happened to me, and now you want to put salt on my wounds by asking me to accept the crown.] (6)

By being the unfortunate and cursed person to have been born in this world from the womb of Kaikeyi, there is no wonder or surprise in it (that I would be made to suffer greater horrors and more pain than that I already have). (7)

My fate has already been doomed by the Creator, then say, why do you ministers, courtiers and the senior citizens who have assembled here want to make it worse for me? [I am already suffering so much, so what gain would you get by rubbing salt on my wounds and see me wallowing in pain?]¹ (8)

[Note—¹In this context, refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-5 that precede Doha no. 179.]

दो०. ग्रह ग्रहीत पुनि बात बस तेहि पुनि बीछी मार ।
 तेहि पिआइअ बारुनी कहहु काह उपचार ॥ १८० ॥
 dōhā.

graha grahīta puni bāta basa tēhi puni bīchī māra.
 tēhi pi'ā'i'a bārūnī kahahu kāha upacāra. 180.

[Ridiculing the efforts made by the courtiers to somehow make him agree to accept the crown, Bharat expressed his disgust at such a proposal by asking them sarcastically—] ‘Tell me one thing: suppose a person is possessed by some evil spirit, and is also suffering from some serious disease that causes hallucination and delirium, and his sufferings are made worse because he has been stung by a scorpion—then someone offers him a cup of wine in the belief that it will provide him with relief and cure him of his disease. How preposterous, ridiculous and absurd is this proposition? Say, what kind of treatment is this, what kind of prescription is this, for this purported remedy (the wine) would kill him instead of giving him relief.’¹ (Doha no. 180)

[Note—¹Bharat means that he is already suffering so much from the unfortunate events of the past few days, and the proposal put forward by the courtiers, that he should accept the crown, seems to add salt to his festering wounds. Even as wine may temporarily make the afflicted person feel a bit relaxed due to its numbing effects on the brain, but it is no solution for the person’s disease or its accompanying sufferings, for as soon as the negative side-effects of wine come into play, the person’s condition would worsen. Wine is no remedy for the curse of evil spirits, and it would only exacerbate hallucinations and deliriums instead of alleviating them. Wine acts like a poison when imbibed by a person stung by a scorpion, and surely its no cure for it. Such a person is already yelling, wailing, tearing his hairs and hopping mad, and wine only aggravates his symptoms.

Bharat says that by his accepting the crown it may appear that things have normalized, and for the time being he too may feel that he is doing the right thing, but sooner rather than later the things would begin to sour, he would be overcome with a sense of guilt, his conscience would make life hell for him, and he will lose his peace of mind. So therefore, his accepting the crown is no solution for any of the sufferings and pain and grief that has overwhelmed the kingdom. Accepting the crown would tarnish his image and blacken his face for all times to come.

So he says disgustfully and repugnantly, “I am already suffering from a heavy heart full of guilt; my conscience is burdened with guilt of being the main culprit behind all the misfortunes and calamity that has befallen on this kingdom. It is me on whose account Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman had to go to the forest, it is on my account that my father Dasrath had to die, and it is me alone who would go down in history as being the selfish scoundrel who had laid a devilish plan to usurp the crown of the kingdom by roping in my wicked mother to act as a front for me. As if this was not enough, lo and behold, I am now being dragged into another trap by those who I hoped would stand by me and support me in my efforts to do repentance and atone for my sins, as well as to set right the wrong already done. Am I so sinful that I am being made to commit another error by accepting the crown which I know would be totally wrong for me to do? Say, you all pretend to be my well-wishers, but what good do you think you are doing to me by pulling me down into a quagmire of eternal infamy and an agony of betrayal of my love for Lord Ram? Woe to you all: I am not so big a fool to bite this ridiculously poisonous bait of giving my approval to your plans to anoint me as the next king of Ayodhya. Nothing doing; it’s not going to happen.”]

चौ०. कैकड़ सुअन जोगु जग जोई । चतुर बिरंचि दीन्ह मोहि सोई ॥ १ ॥

दसरथ तनय राम लघु भाई । दीन्ह मोहि बिधि बादि बड़ाई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kaika'i su'ana jōgu jaga jō'ī. catura birañci dīnha mōhi sō'ī. 1.
 dasaratha tanaya rāma laghu bhā'ī. dīnhi mōhi bidhi bādi baṛā'ī. 2.

Bharat said sarcastically, with disgust in his voice: 'To begin with, the Creator Brahma ("birañci") was so clever that he had given me the honour of becoming a son of Kaikeyi (because she is so wicked and crooked that the Creator found no one else who would be suitable enough to become her son, so he selected me). (1)

But then he (the Creator) realized that it was being unfair to me, so he made up for this error by adding a great honour to me by making me, at the same time, the son of the great king Dasrath as well as a brother of Lord Ram (in order to offset the ignominy cast upon me for being the son of Kaikeyi, for no fault of mine).¹ (2)

[Note—¹Bharat regretted that the Creator had been so cruel upon him that of all the options available to him, he had chosen him (Bharat) to become a son of a wicked woman known as Kaikeyi. But then, the Creator realized that it was unfair to punish me in this way, for I was an innocent and honest soul. So he immediately rectified his error by giving me two honours simultaneously—one, of being the son of a great king named Dasrath, and two, of being the brother of the glorious Lord Ram. So, while I had one taint to my name which made me ashamed of myself, I also had two honours attached to my reputation at the same time that made me lift my head in pride, making me the gainer in the bargain.]

तुम्ह सब कहहु कढ़ावन टीका । राय रजायसु सब कहँ नीका ॥ ३ ॥
 उतरु देउँ केहि बिधि केहि केही । कहहु सुखेन जथा रुचि जेही ॥ ४ ॥

tumha saba kahahu karhāvana ṭikā. rāya rajāyasu saba kham' nīkā. 3.
 utaru dē'um' kēhi bidhi kēhi kēhī. kahahu sukhēna jathā ruci jēhī. 4.

All of you say that I must be anointed on the throne and accept the crown of the kingdom, and you support your proposal by saying that the king (my father Dasrath) too had given this instruction which must be made good (i.e. honoured, accepted) by all. (3)

Now how can I answer individually to everyone and satisfy him or her? [It is not possible for me.]

It's upto you to say whatever suits you and makes you feel comfortable. [But I am not concerned, for I have had enough of this.] (4)

मोहि कुमातु समेत बिहाई । कहहु कहिहि के कीन्ह भलाई ॥ ५ ॥
 मो बिनु को सचराचर माहीं । जेहि सिय रामु प्रानप्रिय नाही ॥ ६ ॥

mōhi kumātu samēta bihā'ī. kahahu kahihi kē kīnha bhalā'ī. 5.
 mō binu kō sacarācara māhīm. jēhi siya rāmu prānapriya nāhīm. 6.

Let me ask you one thing: tell me honestly that except me and my wicked mother, who else has gained anything by whatever has happened?

[Please don't deceive yourselves; no one has gained anything by what my mother did, and perhaps I would be the only exception to it as I would gain the crown of the kingdom due to my mother's wickedness. Tell me truthfully, without fear or favour, do you sincerely endorse my acceptance of the crown in this backdrop? Do you think I would be doing the right thing by accepting the crown after being the cause of my father's death on this account, and my dear brothers Lord Ram and Laxman, as well as my sister-in-law Sita going to the forest because of this specific reason? It is preposterous to even think that it will be honourable for me to sit on a throne that does not belong to me.] (5)

Say, except for my unfortunate self, who else is there in this world to whom Lord Ram and Sita are not dear to his heart and dearer than his life?

[To wit, the circumstances have painted me as being opposed to Lord Ram and Sita, as being inimical to them, for I have been the cause of their being sent to the forest. Say, if I accept the crown, would it not prove that this allegation is correct?]

(6)

परम हानि सब कहँ बड़ लाहू । अदिनु मोर नहिं दूषन काहू ॥ ७ ॥

संसय सील प्रेम बस अहहू । सबुड़ उचित सब जो कछु कहहू ॥ ८ ॥

parama hāni saba kaham̐ bara lāhū. adinu mōra nahim̐ dūṣana kāhū. 7.
sansaya sīla prēma basa ahahū. sabu'i ucita saba jō kachu kahahū. 8.

What is actually the greatest misfortune, a wrongful act and a bane for all appears to be contrary to you, for all of you think it is a good and the correct thing to do to make me a king.

But I can't blame you for this delusion and misconception, for it is also a part of my bad luck that your wisdom and intellect have become corrupted, that you are driven by short-term narrow views, for it is obvious that you are unable to think in a proper, righteous and judicious manner by taking everything into consideration. (7)

You are all driven by doubts and uncertainties that face you; you are being courteous and polite to me; you have affection for me so don't want to offend me and hurt my feelings more.

This is why I would like to agree that whatever you have suggested is done sincerely and in good faith, without any ill-intention or crookedness.

[To wit, I understand that when you request me to ascend the throne, you are being honest in your suggestion, because you think it will sooth my heart and provide comfort to me. I also understand that you are not testing me and my character, that your advice does not have a crooked twist to it.]¹ (8)

[Note—¹During the anguished tirade of Bharat when he had ridiculed and questioned the suggestion of his courtiers to make him the next king of Ayodhya, he quietly observed that they were very hurt and pained by his hinting that they have all gathered together to conspire against him by trapping him with the bait of kingdom so as to paint him as the villain of the piece, the selfish scoundrel who was behind the entire

plan to banish Lord Ram to the forest so as to usurp the kingdom, as being the unfaithful son who had no regrets at the death of his father, king Dasrath. And once Bharat succumbed to this temptation of accepting the crown, then, by and by, these same people would incite a revolt against him, dethrone him, and put him in chains in the prison. To be fair to Bharat, he was not wrong when he doubted the integrity and sincerity of his advisors when they told him to accept the crown, because when he had entered the city he had noted that he was given a cold shoulder by everyone he met, and it was made obvious to him that he was not welcome home (apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 158).

But when Bharat realized that his bitter comments had shocked and hurt the courtiers because they were honest in their suggestions in asking him to accept the crown, and that they had no crooked intentions against him, he changed the course of his discourse to become more polite and understanding in his attitude towards them in order to sooth them and assure them that he too had no ill-will against anyone, that he empathizes with them and understands their compulsions that they want a smooth transition of power so that the affairs of the kingdom do not suffer a catastrophic jolt which would undermine the stability and security of the state.]

दो०. राम मातु सुठि सरलचित मो पर प्रेमु बिसेषि ।
कहइ सुभाय सनेह बस मोरि दीनता देखि ॥ १८१ ॥

dōhā.

rāma mātu suṭhi saralacita mō para prēmu bisēṣi.
kaha'i subhāya sanēha basa mōri dīnatā dēkhi. 181.

I also understand that the mother of Lord Ram (i.e. Kaushalya) has a very pure and simple heart, and she especially loves me very much.

So whatever she has said is out of her love for me and her benevolent nature, for she was moved when she saw my pitiful condition.¹ (Doha no. 181)

[Note—¹Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 164 along with Chaupai line nos. 1, 4-6 that follow it; (ii) Doha no. 168—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 169; and (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 176.]

चौ०. गुर बिबेक सागर जगु जाना । जिन्हहि बिस्व कर बदर समाना ॥ १ ॥
मो कहँ तिलक साज सज सोऊ । भाँ बिधि बिमुख बिमुख सबु कोऊ ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

gura bibēka sāgara jagu jānā. jinhahi bisva kara badara samānā. 1.
mō kham'ṁ tilaka sāja saja sō'ū. bha'ēm'ṁ bidhi bimukha bimukha sabu kō'ū. 2.

[Although appearing to praise sage Vasistha, Bharat actually questions his wisdom and rues at the role he played in the whole episode, implying that the sage failed to do his moral duties when he says:] 'My Guru is well known all over the world as being an ocean of wisdom, sagacity and erudition, for he knows everything in this world and

has a comprehensive knowledge of it just like a person who can examine a plum placed directly in his own palms¹. (1)

Even he wants that I be anointed on the throne; even he has ordered that all arrangements should be made for my appointment to the throne.

Indeed it is such an irony and a paradox of creation that when the Creator himself becomes opposed to someone, then everyone else, no matter how wise, sagacious, intelligent and erudite he or she may be, too becomes opposed to that unfortunate person, they too start toeing the line of the malignant Creator.

[To wit, even a person of the exalted stature and great wisdom as sage Vasistha fell prey to the dictates of destiny and the fiat of fate determined by a cruel Creator who is ill-disposed towards me, so much so that he, the sage, too failed to see the disaster that was knocking on the doors of the kingdom when he failed to stop Lord Ram from going to the forest, which he could easily have done given the power of veto he had on all matters pertaining to the good and welfare of the family and the kingdom at large. Could he not foresee that it would culminate in my father's death and an unprecedented calamity befalling the kingdom?]² (2)

[Note—¹To wit, if a plum is placed in the palms of a person, he is able to closely look at it and examine it from all sides; he can press it softly and touch it to feel its texture; he can smell it and taste it too to determine how it smells and tastes. Likewise, sage Vasistha was highly knowledgeable and an enlightened person who was well versed in all sciences and philosophies; nothing was a secret from him, and when he gave some advice to someone then it was taken for granted that it was well thought of and was the best course of action to be followed by the concerned person.

²“Alas, even my erudite and sagacious guru, sage Vasistha, who is well known for his high stature and wisdom, who can foresee the future and understands politics, religion, philosophy and the principles of Dharma (i.e. what is wrong and what is right) better than anyone else, has also chosen to toe the line of others by advising me to ascend the throne. It is so shocking that he had failed in his duties to stop my father from falling prey to the demands of a wicked woman and allow her to interfere in matters of state by acceding to her outrageous demand of sending the rightful heir to the throne, i.e. Lord Ram, to the forest. I would have liked to hear, and had hoped that sage Vasistha had vetoed my mother's outrageous demands, and had ordered my father, king Dasrath, not to send Lord Ram to the forest. But alas, the sage too slipped in upholding his moral obligations and duties as a guru of the family who would be obliged to give a right, proper and correct advice to his patron without any considerations of fear or favour.

But now I understand why the sage failed to do so: it is because the will of the malignant Creator prevailed over him and corrupted his wisdom and intellect. What more can be expected from others when even a person of the stature of sage Vasistha had been deluded to think that something is right when actually it is not. Fie to me; it is all my misfortune, and I must blame no one for it.”

We would note that Bharat had made this remark against sage Vasistha in full court, in the front of all senior members of the council of ministers, but the sage kept his cool and did not feel annoyed or insulted. Why? It is because the sage was a very wise and prudent man, and he realized that Bharat was highly upset and emotionally disturbed at that moment, and that when a man is distraught and overcome with excess of grief he tends to lose the balance of his mind and wisdom, making it

difficult for him to think coherently and decide what is proper to say and do. Hence, Bharat was fit to be forgiven and pardoned. This idea is endorsed in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 269; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 300.

Another reason why sage Vasistha kept quiet and made no attempts to defend himself against the accusation that he had let Lord Ram go to the forest though he could have intervened and stopped him if he had so wished, was because the sage knew that what he had done was correct and well thought of. It is because the sage was privy to the secret of who Lord Ram was, and why he must go to the forest, for the sage knew that Lord Ram was a manifested form of the Supreme Being who had a mandate to fulfill—which was to eliminate the demons and free mother earth and the gods from their tyranny, and that was not possible unless the Lord went incognito to the forest, and then further on to their capital city of Lanka. These two points would be clear when we carefully read Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 206; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 208 (where we get a hint that sage Vasistha had revealed some secret to king Dasrath and persuaded him to allow Lord Ram and Laxman to go with sage Vishwamitra); and (b) Uttar Kand, (iii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 48—to Doha no. 49 (where Vasistha makes it clear that he knows that Lord Ram is a manifestation of Brahm, the Supreme Being).]

परिहरि रामु सीय जग माहीं । कोउ न कहिहि मोर मत नाहीं ॥ ३ ॥

सो मैं सुनब सहब सुखु मानी । अंतहुँ कीच तहाँ जहँ पानी ॥ ४ ॥

parihari rāmu sīya jaga māhīm. kō'u na kahihi mōra mata nāhīm. 3.
sō mair̃ sunaba sahaba sukhu mānī. antahum̃ kīca tahām̃ jaham̃ pānī. 4.

Except Lord Ram and Sita, no one would believe that I have had no hand or role to play in the Lord going to the forest. [To wit, only Lord Ram and Sita know that I have had nothing to do with my mother's wicked plans that forced them to the forest. No one else in this world would believe me if I say so, no matter what oath I take.] (3)

But alas, I would have to live hearing this false and outrageous allegation upon me throughout my unfortunate life, for as long as I live, and I would have to somehow cope with it, with the only relief and comfort to my conscience that comes from the thought that Lord Ram and Sita know that this allegation is false. (4)

[Note—These verses clearly tell us why Bharat is so reluctant to accept the crown, and why he looks at the advice of the courtiers to accept the crown with a lot of skepticism. He clearly says that everyone believes that he was behind Lord Ram's banishment to the forest as he wanted to grab the kingdom. What they say now, that he ought to ascend the throne, is just an outward show of courteousness and to be on the good books of the de facto king of Ayodhya, for everyone believed that it was natural for Bharat to ascend the throne and become a king in the absence of any other heir, and Lord Ram coming back after fourteen long years is something in the lap of a distant and uncertain future. So therefore, it was obvious that no one would like to give the impression that he or she is opposed to Bharat's ascension for the fear of severe retribution and vengeance he or she would be subjected to once Bharat gets his

hold on the power-levers of the kingdom. Hence, everyone thought it wise to publicly support his anointment, but Bharat was sure that no one liked it at a personal level, that the citizens hated him.]

डरु न मोहि जग कहिहि कि पोचू । परलोकहु कर नाहिन सोचू ॥ ५ ॥
एकड़ उर बस दुसह दवारी । मोहि लागि भे सिय रामु दुखारी ॥ ६ ॥

ḍaru na mōhi jaga kahihi ki pōcū. paralōkahu kara nāhina sōcū. 5.
ēka'i ura basa dusaha davārī. mōhi lagi bhē siya rāmu dukhārī. 6.

Bharat poignantly said: 'I am not worried or regretful that the world would call me evil, selfish and wicked, and neither am I concerned about my destiny being doomed'¹. (5)

What does bother me actually, and burns my heart in a great fire of regret and repentance, is that Lord Ram and Sita has had to suffer due to me².

[To wit, I have become a cause of Lord Ram going to the forest, though I had no role to play in it at all. I just can't overcome this pain that bleeds my heart and sets it on fire!] (6)

[Note—¹An exactly similar sense of self-reproach has been expressed by Bharat later on in sage Bharadwaj's hermitage. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 211.

²Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 211—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 212.]

जीवन लाहु लखन भल पावा । सबु तजि राम चरन मनु लावा ॥ ७ ॥
मोर जनम रघुबर बन लागी । झूठ काह पछिताउँ अभागी ॥ ८ ॥

jīvana lāhu lakhana bhala pāvā. sabu taji rāma carana manu lāvā. 7.
mōra janama raghubara bana lāgī. jhūṭha kāha pachitā'um' abhāgī. 8.

Verily indeed, Laxman is so extremely lucky and blessed that he has got the reward of living a fruitful life here and now by abandoning everything else and focusing his attention in having an abiding love and devotion for the holy feet of the Lord in as much as that he decided to accompany him to the forest and serve him there every moment of his life.

[To wit, whereas I have been the cause of suffering to the Lord, Laxman is so highly blessed and fortunate that he renounced everything and decided to serve the Lord by accompanying him to the forest and helping in whatever humble way he could.] (7)

As for myself, I am most unfortunate and feel ashamed that I had been the cause for Lord Ram's banishment to the forest.

[To wit, instead of being of any help to the Lord, my accursed self became a means by which the Lord was made to suffer in the forest. Fie to me!] (8)

दो०. आपनि दारुन दीनता कहउँ सबहि सिरु नाइ ।
देखें बिनु रघुनाथ पद जिय कै जरनि न जाइ ॥ १८२ ॥

dōhā.

āpani dārūna dīnatā kaha'um̐ sabahi siru nā'i.
dēkhēm binu raghunātha pada jiya kai jarani na jā'i. 182.

Verily indeed, in all earnest and truthfully I humbly beg to express the excessive pain of my heart and the agony I am suffering from by bowing my head before everyone to plead that there is no other way to sooth me and douse the raging fire that burns my heart and roasts me from within than to be able to see the august feet of Lord Ram (the Lord of the Raghus; “raghunātha”) once again. (Doha no. 182)

[Note—With this submission, Bharat laid the foundation of what he proposed to do—i.e. to go to the forest and ask forgiveness from Lord Ram, requesting him to come back and ascend the throne that rightly belongs to him. We shall read herein below that when he makes his intention clear, he became a dear to all, and whatever misunderstandings anyone had harboured against him, vanished. {Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 183; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 184; and (iii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 185.}]

चौ०. आन उपाउ मोहि नहिं सूझा । को जिय कै रघुबर बिनु बूझा ॥ १ ॥
एकहिं आँक इहइ मन माहीं । प्रातकाल चलिहउँ प्रभु पाहीं ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

āna upā'u mōhi nahim̐ sūjhā. kō jiya kai raghubara binu būjhā. 1.
ēkahim̐ āṁka iha'i mana māhīm̐. prātakāla caliha'um̐ prabhu pāhīm̐. 2.

[True devotion and loyalty towards Lord Ram also means that the devotee has complete and absolute faith in his Lord that no matter how bad, sinful, evil or fallen he might be, the Lord will always accept him and forgive him irrespective of his follies. Bharat clearly affirms this firmness of faith in the Lord's merciful and gracious nature with what he declares in the following verses—]

I see no other course of action or remedy for my distress (than to go and ask for forgiveness from Lord Ram), for there is no one else other than Lord Ram who can understand the agony and distress of my heart. (1)

I have only one firm desire in my heart that as soon as day breaks tomorrow, I will start on my journey to go to Lord Ram. (2)

जद्यपि मैं अनभल अपराधी । भै मोहि कारन सकल उपाधी ॥ ३ ॥
तदपि सरन सनमुख मोहि देखी । छमि सब करिहहि कृपा बिसेषी ॥ ४ ॥

jadyapi mairṁ anabhala aparādhī. bhai mōhi kārana sakala upādhī. 3.
tadapi sarana sanamukha mōhi dēkhī. chami saba karihahim kṛpā bisēṣī. 4.

Bharat expressed his complete faith and confidence in Lord Ram that the Lord would definitely forgive him and accept him unconditionally inspite of all the bitterness of events that had unfolded by affirming in full court that had assembled to decide the next course of action, 'Although I am evil and sinful by all counts, and am definitely the accused who has been at the root cause for the nasty events and the mischief that have created in my name, albeit I had no role to play in them nor was I privy to any evil mechanisms of my evil mother, --- (3)

--- But still I am absolutely certain and confident that when the Lord would see that I have come to surrender myself before him and begging for forgiveness, the all-merciful and kind Lord would not only forget everything in a moment but would also lovingly welcome and accept me by showing exemplary grace and mercy upon me. (4)

सील सकुच सुठि सरल सुभाऊ । कृपा सनेह सदन रघुराऊ ॥ ५ ॥
अरिहुक अनभल कीन्ह न रामा । मैं सिसु सेवक जद्यपि बामा ॥ ६ ॥

sīla sakuca suṭhi sarala subhā'ū. kṛpā sanēha sadana raghurā'ū. 5.
arihuka anabhala kīnha na rāmā. mairṁ sisu sēvaka jadyapi bāmā. 6.

Verily indeed, in all sooth and without gainsay, Lord Ram ("raghurā'ū"—the exalted King of the Raghu line of kings of Ayodhya) is most kind, courteous, gracious, benevolent and loving, hesitant to punish and show annoyance towards his offenders, of an extremely affable and simple nature, as well as an abode of mercy and compassion. (5)

Lord Ram has never ever harmed even his enemy. I am after all like his child though I may be mischievous and naughty by nature, being the cause of nuisance to the Lord.

[To wit, just like a loving and doting father loves his only son even though the son may cause a lot of nuisance to him, let it be known that Lord Ram loves me in the same manner. So he will cheerfully embrace me inspite of all the mischief that has been caused due to me.] (6)

तुम्ह पै पाँच मोर भल मानी । आयसु आसिष देहु सुबानी ॥ ७ ॥
जेहिं सुनि बिनय मोहि जनु जानी । आवहिं बहुरि रामु रजधानी ॥ ८ ॥

tumha pai pām̐ca mōra bhala mānī. āyasu āsiṣa dēhu subānī. 7.
jēhim suni binaya mōhi janu jānī. āvahim bahuri rāmu rajadhānī. 8.

Now I urge and request you all, especially the five most senior amongst the courtiers (pāṁca), to consider my submission as being for the best of my interests, and grant me your auspicious permission by instructing me accordingly, --- (7)

--- So that I may go and pray to Lord Ram (to forgive me, and) to treat me as one of his humble servants, and consequently come back to his capital of Ayodhya (to be anointed as a king)¹. (8)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 212 where Bharat makes this same observation before sage Bharadwaj.]

दो०. जद्यपि जनमु कुमातु तें मैं सठु सदा सदोस ।

आपन जानि न त्यागिहहिं मोहि रघुबीर भरोस ॥ १८३ ॥

dōhā.

jadyapi janamu kumātu tēṁ mairṁ saṭhu sadā sadōsa.
āpana jāni na tyāgihahim mōhi raghubīra bharōsa. 183.

Though unfortunately I was born of a wicked mother, and I have unwittingly become sinful and tainted myself, but I have absolute confidence and full faith in my Lord Ram (“raghubīra”—the great warrior of the Raghu line of kings) that when he finds that I have come to him as one of his own, he will definitely accept me, and never forsake me.¹ (Doha no. 183)

[Note—¹In these verses Bharat essentially says that though it is correct that he (Bharat) is the root cause of all the mischief that has occurred in Ayodhya which led to Lord Ram’s forest exile and the death of his father Dasrath, it is certain that when Lord Ram sees him (Bharat) in front, seeking forgiveness and refuge in the Lord’s holy feet, he (the Lord) would surely forgive him (Bharat) and lovingly accept him, because the Lord is an ocean of mercy and compassion.

It is to be remarked at this juncture that whatever Bharat has said here in his reply to sage Vasistha, mother Kaushalya, ministers and other senior citizens who had gathered in the royal court to persuade Bharat to accept the crown, viz. from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 178—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 183, has been reiterated by him once again before sage Bharadwaj when he met the sage at his hermitage—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 211—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 212.

चौ०. भरत बचन सब कहँ प्रिय लागे । राम सनेह सुधाँ जनु पागे ॥ १ ॥

लोग बियोग बिषम बिष दागे । मंत्र सबीज सुनत जनु जागे ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

bharata bacana saba kham̐ priya lāgē. rāma sanēha sudhām̐ janu pāgē. 1.
lōga biyōga biṣama biṣa dāgē. mantra sabīja sunata janu jāgē. 2.

The words of Bharat were liked very much by everyone present there, for his words were soaked in love and affection for Lord Ram who was also very dear to them all. (1)

Everyone was tormented by the negative effects of the grief of separation from Lord Ram, for it was like a cauldron of immense suffering for them. In this situation, the words of Bharat¹ were like a divine Mantra (a spiritual formula) that had an instant soothing effect on them as if a balm has been applied on their scorched wounds. (2)

[Note—¹The declaration of Bharat that his interests and welfare lay in serving Lord Ram and not in accepting the crown of the kingdom, and that he would go to Lord Ram to beg for forgiveness and ask him to come back to accept the crown, was welcomed by every single citizen of Ayodhya. The tenor of Bharat's speech and the tone of his voice made it clear to everyone that he was extremely sad, full of regrets and overcome with remorse, that he is repentant for the misdeeds of his mother done in his name, that his character and virtues were exemplary, and that his love and affection for Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman were beyond reproach. All doubts and suspicions regarding Bharat's intentions and character vanished from the minds of everyone, and he became dear to all. {Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 178—to ; (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 183; (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 185.}]

मातु सचिव गुर पुर नर नारी । सकल सनेहँ बिकल भए भारी ॥ ३ ॥
भरतहि कहहिं सराहि सराही । राम प्रेम मूरति तनु आही ॥ ४ ॥

mātu saciva gura pura nara nārī. sakala sanēham' bikala bha'ē bhārī. 3.
bharatahi kahahim sarāhi sarāhī. rāma prēma mūrati tanu āhī. 4.

The mother (i.e. Kaushalya), the ministers (including the chief minister Sumantra), the guru (sage Vasistha), and the citizens, both the males and the females—everyone was moved by Bharat's attitude and emotionally overwhelmed with love and affection for him. (3)

They minced no words in appreciating Bharat and his excellent character by repeatedly declaring, unanimously and without reservations, that he was an embodiment of love and affection for Lord Ram. (4)

तात भरत अस काहे न कहहू । प्रान समान राम प्रिय अहहू ॥ ५ ॥
जो पावँरु अपनी जड़ताई । तुम्हहि सुगाइ मातु कुटिलाई ॥ ६ ॥
सो सठु कोटिक पुरुष समेता । बसिहि कलप सत नरक निकेता ॥ ७ ॥
अहि अध अवगुन नहिं मनि गहई । हरइ गरल दुख दारिद दहई ॥ ८ ॥

tāta bharata asa kāhē na kahahū. prāna samāna rāma priya ahahū. 5.
jō pāvam'ru apanī jaratā'īm. tumhahi sugā'i mātu kuṭilā'īm. 6.
sō saṭhu kōṭika puruṣa samētā. basihi kalapa sata naraka nikētā. 7.

ahi agha avaguna nahim mani gaha'i. hara'i garala dukha dārida daha'i. 8.

They lauded Bharat when they said to him: 'Oh dear Bharat, why would you not say what you have said because Lord Ram is as dear to you as your own life is for you, that you love him as dearly as you would love your own self. (5)

If anyone of low intellect accuses you of being wicked and crooked in the same way as your mother (Kaikeyi) is just by the virtue of you being her son, then definitely such a person is ignorant of the facts, and is bankrupt of wisdom and intelligence. (6)

Verily indeed, in all sooth and without gainsay, if anyone thinks negatively of you, and casts aspersions on your immaculate character and purity of heart, then surely such a person would be condemned to dwell in hell for hundreds of years. (7)

The 'Mani' (the gem found on the hood of certain class of serpents) is not at all affected by the various faults and the poisonous nature of the serpent. On the contrary, this Mani is able to alleviate sorrows, it antidotes the effect of poison, and it removes the sufferings arising out of poverty and misfortunes¹. (8)

[Note—¹Here, Bharat is likened to the 'Mani', while Kaikeyi, his mother, to the poisonous serpent. While Kaikeyi had brought so much grief and sorrows on the whole kingdom, even becoming the cause of her husband's death and Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman going to the forest, Bharat, on the other hand, proved to be the opposite of what his mother represented, for Bharat brought hope, joy and redemption for all; he tried his best to undo the mischief perpetrated in his name by his wicked mother, and he exhibited the best of virtues and a noble character that was fit for a great prince of the illustrious family to which he belonged, and was the opposite of what his mother represented.

While Kaikeyi disrupted peace and harmony in the kingdom, throwing it into a tailspin of sorrows and grief, Bharat united the people and brought hope, joy and happiness to them.]

दो०. अवसि चलिअ बन रामु जहँ भरत मंत्रु भल कीन्ह ।

सोक सिंधु बूड़त सबहि तुम्ह अवलंबनु दीन्ह ॥ १८४ ॥

dōhā.

avasi cali'a bana rāmu jaham' bharata mantru bhala kīnha.
sōka sindhu būrata sabahi tumha avalambanu dīnha. 184.

Everyone unanimously endorsed Bharat's proposal to start on a journey the next day to go and meet Lord Ram in the forest.

They said: 'Surely we shall all go to the forest where Lord Ram is, and we all appreciate this decision of Bharat and approve of it as being right and well thought of.

Oh Bharat, we thank you very much for being like a ship to provide us solace and succour by way of hope of survival in a vast ocean of grief and sorrows that was about to drown us all.¹ (Doha no. 184)

[Note—¹This episode of the assembly of the royal court wherein Bharat was offered the crown of the kingdom of Ayodhya and his outright refusal to accept it, his public display of anger and repugnance at his mother's evil deeds, and his declaration that his best interests lay in going to Lord Ram and beg him for forgiveness, bring him back, and anoint him on the throne, and his noble character and righteous attitude making him endeared to all, which has been described in great detail in our present book *Ram Charit Manas*, has also been described, albeit briefly, in Veda Vyas' "Adhyatma Ramayan", Ayodhya Kand, Canto 8, verse nos. 1-11.]

चौ०. भा सब कें मन मोदु न थोरा । जनु घन धुनि सुनि चातक मोरा ॥ १ ॥

चलत प्रात लखि निरनउ नीके । भरतु प्रानप्रिय भे सबही के ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

bhā saba kēm mana mōdu na thōrā. janu ghana dhuni suni cātaka mōrā. 1.
calata prāta lakhi nirana'u nīkē. bharatu prānapriya bhē sabahī kē. 2.

The sense of sheer joy, happiness and exhilaration in the heart and mind ("mana") of all the citizens was no less than similar emotions felt by the Chatak bird (the sparrow hawk) as well as the Peacock when they hear the rumbling sound of a rain-bearing cloud and its accompanying clap of thunder¹. (1)

'We shall proceed to the forest in the morning'—this firm decision and public declaration of Bharat endeared him to one and all². (2)

[Note—¹The Chatak bird thirsts for rain drops, for it quenches its thirst by drinking rain water that directly falls in its beak. So it is natural for it to be exceptionally excited when it sees approaching clouds, and the thunder and rumbling of the cloud indicates to it that rain is imminent, for only those clouds that have rain would rumble and thunder, and not rain-less clouds that float endlessly in a clear sky.

Similarly, the peacock also begins to dance as soon as it hears the sound of the rain-bearing cloud, for it loves the rainy season.

In the context of this verse, refer also to: *Ram Charit Manas*, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 251.

In this metaphor, Bharat is the 'rain-bearing cloud'; his discourse during which he vehemently condemned his mother's actions and refused to accept the crown which he said rightly belonged to Lord Ram, proved him innocent and established his love for the Lord. His final declaration that he will go to the forest and ask for forgiveness from Lord Ram, and try to bring him back, is likened to the 'pleasant and most welcome sound of the rain-bearing cloud'; and those who heard him, i.e. the citizens and courtiers, were like 'the Chatak and the Peacock' because Bharat's words made them exceptionally happy.

²In this context, refer to *Ram Charit Manas*, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 184 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it and narrated herein above.]

मुनिहि बंदि भरतहि सिरु नाई । चले सकल घर बिदा कराई ॥ ३ ॥

धन्य भरत जीवन्तु जग माहीं । सीलु सनेहु सराहत जाहीं ॥ ४ ॥

munihi bandi bharatahi siru nā'ī. calē sakala ghara bidā karā'ī. 3.
dhan'ya bharata jīvanu jaga māhīm. sīlu sanēhu sarāhata jāhīm. 4.

All those who were present during the meeting paid their respects to sage Vasistha and bowed their heads before Bharat to take their leave, and departed to go to their own homes. (3)

While they were on their way home, everyone talked about the events of the day, praising Bharat lavishly and proclaiming that his life is one good example of excellence and goodness, lauding his good virtues, excellent character, nobility of thought, righteousness of attitude, auspicious nature, and politeness of demeanours. (4)

कहहिं परसपर भा बड़ काजू । सकल चलै कर साजहिं साजू ॥ ५ ॥
जेहि राखहिं रहु घर रखवारी । सो जानइ जनु गरदनि मारी ॥ ६ ॥
कोउ कह रहन कहिअ नहिं काहू । को न चहइ जग जीवन लाहू ॥ ७ ॥

kahahīm parasapara bhā baṛa kājū. sakala calai kara sājahīm sājū. 5.
jēhi rākhahīm rahu ghara rakhavārī. sō jāna'i janū garadani mārī. 6.
kō'u kaha rahana kahi'a nahīm kāhū. kō na caha'i jaga jīvana lāhū. 7.

They talked amongst themselves and said to each other that a great objective has been accomplished¹. So now, the next urgent thing to do was to make haste and make all preparations for departure for the long journey (to the forest). (5)

Everyone wanted to accompany the procession that would head to the forest to where Lord Ram was, and anyone who was asked to stay back to take care of household affairs felt as he had been cuffed in the neck. (6)

Some people suggested that no one should be forced to stay back, for who does not want to enjoy the reward of happiness that would come to one when he meets Lord Ram?

[To wit, everyone was of the opinion that no one ought to be compelled to stay back in the city to look after one's household affairs against his wish, for all had the right to see their beloved Lord Ram and be a witness of the moment when the Lord agrees to come back home. No one should be deprived of this momentous occasion of joy and happiness.] (7)

[Note—¹Everyone had wanted to see Lord Ram as their next king as is evident from the mass celebrations in Ayodhya when it was first declared that the king has decided to anoint him on the throne—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 1; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 3; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 3-7 that precede Doha no. 5; (iv) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 7; and (v) Doha no. 8 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede it.

Compared to this, the prospect of Bharat getting the crown did not go down well with the citizens, and when he came back to Ayodhya he was shown a cold shoulder by everyone he met—refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 158 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede it.

Prior to Bharat's decision and declaration that he won't, on any account, accept the crown, and that he would proceed to the forest to meet Lord Ram the very next day, without delay, it was not certain what he would do, and the citizens were in a dilemma, for at the personal level they did not want Bharat to occupy a throne that rightly belonged to Lord Ram whom each single citizen of Ayodhya loved very much, but on the other hand they also had no choice but to quietly accept Bharat as their king to avoid his wrath once he ascends the throne.

So, as soon as it became clear that Bharat had no hand in the plot hatched by his mother which resulted in Lord Ram going to the forest, and that he loved the Lord no less than any other citizen of Ayodhya, Bharat became very dear to one and all.]

दो०. जरउ सो संपति सदन सुखु सुहृद मातु पितु भाइ ।
सनमुख होत जो राम पद करै न सहस सहाइ ॥ १८५ ॥

dōhā.

jara'u sō sampati sadana sukhu suhr̥da mātū pitu bhā'i.
sanamukha hōta jō rāma pada karai na sahāsa sahā'i. 185.

Verily indeed, let that wealth, that home, those things that provide happiness, those relations, those parents, those brothers, et al—let all of them perish in fire and get destroyed if anyone of them do not come forward to help a person in submitting himself or herself at the august feet of Lord Ram.

[To wit, if anything or anyone obstructs or creates a hindrance in a person's path to reach and attain nearness with Lord Ram, in having devotion for the Lord and serving the latter, then let all such things or people perish by getting burnt in fire, for they are of no worth for the person who seeks peace and redemption of his soul by becoming a devotee of the Lord.]¹ (Doha no. 185)

[Note—¹A similar idea is expressed in (i) Kavitawali Ramayan, Uttar Kand, verse no. 40-43; and (ii) Vinai Patrika, verse no. 174.]

चौ०. घर घर साजहिं बाहन नाना । हरषु हृदयँ परभात पयाना ॥ १ ॥
भरत जाइ घर कीन्ह बिचारू । नगरु बाजि गज भवन भँडारू ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

ghara ghara sājahim bāhana nānā. haraṣu hr̥dayam̐ parabhāta payānā. 1.
bharata jā'i ghara kīnha bicārū. nagaru bāji gaja bhavana bhamḍārū. 2.

Every household was engaged in making preparations, and vehicles of different kinds were being arranged for the journey. There was great excitement amongst the citizens as they prepared for departure as soon as it was dawn the next day. (1)

Meanwhile, Bharat went home and became pensive, for he had a great responsibility on his shoulders. The populous city was thriving, prosperous and rich; it had an abundance of horses and elephants, as well as numerous warehouses and storehouses, such as treasuries, barns, market places with their packed shops and trading places, and so on and so forth, the proper protection of all must be made before departure. (2)

संपति सब रघुपति कै आही । जौं बिनु जतन चलौं तजि ताही ॥ ३ ॥
तौ परिनाम न मोरि भलाई । पाप सिरोमनि साइँ दोहाई ॥ ४ ॥

sampati saba raghupati kai āhī. jaur̥ṁ binu jatana calaur̥ṁ taji tāhī. 3.
tau parināma na mōri bhalā'ī. pāpa sirōmani sā'im̐ dōhā'ī. 4.

Bharat thought to himself that all this wealth belonged to Lord Ram, and if he acts carelessly and insensitively by departing without making proper arrangements for their upkeep and safety, --- (3)

--- Then the result would not be good for him, for it would mean committing a grave sin by not living upto his responsibilities, and betraying and undermining the trust and faith the people and the sovereign (in this case Lord Ram) has reposed in him (that Bharat is a responsible person who will do his duties most diligently and conscientiously). (4)

करइ स्वामि हित सेवकु सोई । दूषन कोटि देइ किन कोई ॥ ५ ॥
अस बिचारि सुचि सेवक बोले । जे सपनेहुँ निज धरम न डोले ॥ ६ ॥

kara'i svāmi hita sēvaku sō'ī. dūṣana kōṭi dē'i kina kō'ī. 5.
asa bicāri suci sēvaka bōlē. jē sapanēhum̐ nija dharama na ḍolē. 6.

Verily, a good and obedient servant is one who is careful in serving his lord and diligent in doing things intelligently in such a way that would be beneficial for the interest of his lord even though his actions may not go down well with others who may not understand the underlying reason and good intentions for his actions¹. (5)

Thinking thus, and taking cognizance of the seriousness of matter, Bharat summoned faithful and loyal servants who were exceptionally diligent and upright, who had a noble character and were obedient, and who would never fall astray from their duties and get distracted from their responsibilities even in their dreams. (6)

[Note—¹A faithful and loyal servant takes care of his lord more than he cares for himself, and he always keeps the interest of his lord in mind while doing anything. Here Bharat was worried about the safety and security of the city of Ayodhya after he leaves it to go to the forest. He was not going alone; royal family members, courtiers and ministers, besides a large section of the people would accompany him, and a good section of the army was needed to accompany them to give protection to the procession. There was the danger that enemies of the kingdom could exploit the situation when they learn that the throne was empty and there was no one to hold

charge while Bharat, his ministers, commanders of the army, senior citizens etc. had all departed on a long journey to the forest. There was also the fear of chaos and anarchy within the kingdom itself.

Hence, Bharat decided that he must make proper arrangements before departure.

It ought to be noted that Bharat does not consider himself as a ruler, but as a faithful servant of the true sovereign, who in this case was Lord Ram. Bharat was merely a custodian of the place, and therefore it was his duty to take proper care of a thing put in his custody so that when the rightful owner comes he can hand over the charge with a smile on his face.

Now, in order to give effect to his decision, he would have to order that everyone is not coming along with him to the forest, that only a selected number of people would be allowed to accompany him, and the rest must stay back to ensure that the work and functioning of the city goes on smoothly as before. We have just read that everyone wanted to join Bharat in the procession heading to the forest, there was great excitement in the city as every household was preparing vehicles to start on the long journey. But now, the order of Bharat—that only a limited numbers should accompany him and the rest should stay back—would act as a dampener to their enthusiasm. Many of those who wanted to go would now have to stay back.

This is what is alluded to in this verse when it is said that “even though his actions may not go down well with others who may not understand the underlying reason and good intentions for his actions”.]

कहि सबु मरमु धरमु भल भाषा । जो जेहि लायक सो तेहिं राखा ॥ ७ ॥
करि सबु जतनु राखि रखवारे । राम मातु पहिं भरतु सिधारे ॥ ८ ॥

kahi sabu maramu dharamu bhala bhāṣā. jō jēhi lāyaka sō tēhiṁ rākhā. 7.
kari sabu jatanu rākhi rakhavārē. rāma mātu pahim bharatu sidhārē. 8.

He (Bharat) explained to them clearly the gravity of the situation, exhorting them to fulfill their duties and keep their honour. Then he assigned to them different tasks according to their aptitudes and abilities. (7)

After putting everything into its proper place and making adequate arrangements for all eventualities, Bharat went to meet Kaushalya, the mother of Lord Ram. (8)

दो०. आरत जननीं जानि सब भरत सनेह सुजान ।
कहेउ बनावन पालकीं सजन सुखासन जान ॥ १८६ ॥

dōhā.

ārata jananīm jāni saba bharata sanēha sujāna.
kahē'u banāvana pālakīm sajana sukhāsana jāna. 186.

Finding that all the mothers¹ were overcome with grief, the wise Bharat ordered that proper vehicles with suitable paraphernalia and comfortable equipments must be prepared to take them along to the forest. (Doha no. 186)

[Note—¹It is to be remarked here that even Kaikeyi was full of grief and regret as she realized her mistake and was burdened with a guilty conscience, especially when she discovered that her son, Bharat, for whom she had done so many evil things was not prepared to accept the crown, and that he has become opposed to her. But since what had happened could not be undone now, she had no other option but to bear with the ignominy for the rest of her life although she was very regretful and lamented at her stupidity.

So, did Kaikeyi accompany other mothers to go to the forest? Yes, surely she did. We find the answer in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 244 where we read that when the procession reached Chitrakoot, Lord Ram had first met Kaikeyi and comforted her before he met other mothers, i.e. Kaushalya (his own mother) and Sumitra (Laxman's mother).]

चौ०. चक्क चक्कि जिमि पुर नर नारी । चहत प्रात उर आरत भारी ॥ १ ॥

जागत सब निसि भयउ बिहाना । भरत बोलाए सचिव सुजाना ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

cakka cakki jimi pura nara nārī. cahata prāta ura ārata bhārī. 1.

jāgata saba nisi bhaya'u bihānā. bharata bōlā'ē saciva sujānā. 2.

The citizens of Ayodhya eagerly waited for the break of dawn of the next day just like the female and the male Chakva birds spend the night uneasily and look forward for the arrival of dawn (so that they can be reunited)¹. (1)

All of them kept awake the whole night (because excitement prevented them from getting even a wink of sleep) till it was daybreak, when Bharat called his ministers and councilors who were all wise and intelligent. (2)

[Note—¹The Chakva bird, i.e. the ruddy goose, have a very peculiar character, which is that the male and the female partners separate as soon as night falls, and spend the whole night agitatedly as they wait for the dawn of the next day when they would reunite. In a similar way, each hour seems an age for the citizens as they passed the night and awaited the dawn of the next day when they would start on their journey to meet Lord Ram.]

कहेउ लेहु सबु तिलक समाजू । बनहिं देब मुनि रामहि राजू ॥ ३ ॥

बेगि चलहु सुनि सचिव जोहारे । तुरत तुरग रथ नाग सँवारे ॥ ४ ॥

kahē'u lēhu sabu tilaka samājū. banahim dēba muni rāmahī rājū. 3.

bēgi calahu suni saciva jōhārē. turata turaga ratha nāga samvārē. 4.

He (Bharat) instructed them to take along all necessary things that were needed for anointment of a king, for (he wished that) the sage (Vasistha) would formally crown Lord Ram as the next king of Ayodhya in the forest itself (without waiting for him to come back to Ayodhya for the ceremony)¹. (3)

Bharat asked them to make haste. The councilors and ministers paid their obeisance to him and immediately went ahead to carry out his instructions, readying chariots, horses and elephants for the procession. (4)

[Note—¹Bharat did not want to leave any doubts about his intentions that he was serious when he says that he will not accept the crown because it rightly belonged to Lord Ram. By insisting that he would anoint Lord Ram as the king of Ayodhya right in the forest itself, without waiting for the Lord to come back to the city, Bharat wished to prove his integrity and honesty to one and all, as well as set to rest any apprehension anybody might secretly hide regarding his agenda in showing so much hurry in going to the forest. Bharat was not wrong if he thought so, because we shall be reading that both Guha Nishad and Laxman were suspicious of Bharat's intentions in going to the forest to meet Lord Ram, especially because he was accompanied by a large convoy consisting of supplies and army. This apprehension is explicitly narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 189—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 192 (Guha Nishad); and (ii) Chanda line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 226—to Doha no. 230 (Laxman).

We read that later on when it would dawn upon Bharat that Lord Ram would not accept the crown till the end of fourteen years during which he was supposed to live like a hermit in the forest in deference to his father's words, Bharat has expressed his distress and wanted to know from the Lord and other sages assembled in the Lord's hermitage in Chitrakoot what is to be done with the paraphernalia he (Bharat) has brought along with the aim of crowning the Lord in the forest itself—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 307.]

अरुंधती अरु अग्नि समाऊ । रथ चढ़ि चले प्रथम मुनिराऊ ॥ ५ ॥
बिप्र बृंद चढ़ि बाहन नाना । चले सकल तप तेज निधाना ॥ ६ ॥

arundhatī aru agini samā'ū. ratha caḍhi calē prathama munirā'ū. 5.
bipra bṛnda caḍhi bāhana nānā. calē sakala tapa tēja nidhānā. 6.

[In the following verses we read the manner in which the procession was organized.]

With his wife Arundhati and oblations needed to be offered to the sacred fire, sage Vasistha was the first to board a chariot and led the procession from the front. (5)

Then followed Brahmins, who were embodiments of glorious virtues and endowed with spiritual aura acquired by doing austerities, in different kind of vehicles. (7)

नगर लोग सब सजि सजि जाना । चित्रकूट कहँ कीन्ह पयाना ॥ ७ ॥
सिबिका सुभग न जाहिं बखानी । चढ़ि चढ़ि चलत भई सब रानी ॥ ८ ॥

nagara lōga saba saji saji jānā. citrakūṭa kaham' kīnha payānā. 7.
sibikā subhaga na jāhim bakhānī. caḍhi caḍhi calata bha'īm saba rānī. 8.

All the citizens followed next, boarding vehicles (such as chariots) according to their choices as they departed for Chitrakoot. (7)

All the queens rode palanquins that were so well decorated and made comfortable for their journey that it is not possible to describe each of them. (8)

दो०. सौंपि नगर सुचि सेवकनि सादर सकल चलाइ ।
सुमिरि राम सिय चरन तब चले भरत दोउ भाइ ॥ १८७ ॥

dōhā.

saumpi nagara suci sēvakani sādara sakala calā'i.
sumiri rāma siya carana taba calē bharata dō'u bhā'i. 187.

After handing over the charge of taking care of the city of Ayodhya to persons selected for this purpose earlier (such as commanders, wardens, courtiers, ministers, and some seniors of the society who Bharat had requested to stay back to take care of the affairs of the city in his absence)¹, and ordering those selected to accompany the procession to proceed on the journey, Bharat and his younger brother Shatrughan remembered and mentally paid their obeisance at the holy feet of Lord Ram and Sita as they too joined the royal procession in its rear and departed on the journey to the forest. (Doha no. 187)

[Note—¹Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precede Doha no. 186.

चौ०. राम दरस बस सब नर नारी । जनु करि करिनि चले तकि बारी ॥ १ ॥
बन सिय रामु समुझि मन माहीं । सानुज भरत पयादेहिं जाहीं ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

rāma darasa basa saba nara nārī. janu kari karini calē taki bārī. 1.
bana siya rāmu samujhi mana māhīm. sānuja bharata payādēhīm jāhīm. 2.

All the citizens, the males as well as the females, were so eager to see Lord Ram and be with him that they were moving very briskly, as fast as they could, so that they can reach the Lord as soon as it was humanly possible for them to do it, just like a thirsty herd of male and female elephants make a mad dash towards a source of water as soon as they get sight of it. (1)

Taking into consideration the fact that Lord Ram and Sita were living in the forest (like a hermit), Bharat and his younger brother (Shatrughan) decided to walk barefoot (instead of boarding a chariot)¹. (2)

[Note—¹Barefoot? Yes indeed, Bharat and Shatrughan did walk on the rough forest path 'barefoot' as would be proved later on when we read that blisters formed on the sole of Bharat's feet because of his walking on the road that was hot, rough, and littered with stones and prickly thorns—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand,

(i) Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 203; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 204.

Remember: Lord Ram had left the chariot sent by his father, and driven by the chief minister Sumantra, long ago, and then he had walked on foot for the rest of his journey. Everyone who met Bharat on the path to Chitrakoot were all praise for him as they unanimously applauded him for undertaking this arduous journey as a means of penance to atone for the sins he has been erroneously accused of, and everyone appreciated his gesture of travelling on foot because Lord Ram had also traveled on foot while going to the forest—this is clearly stated in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 222 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it.

[This was an exemplary sacrifice that Bharat made.]

देखि सनेहु लोग अनुरागे । उतरि चले हय गय रथ त्यागे ॥ ३ ॥
जाइ समीप राखि निज डोली । राम मातु मृदु बानी बोली ॥ ४ ॥

dēkhi sanēhu lōga anurāgē. utari calē haya gaya ratha tyāgē. 3.
jā'i samīpa rākhi nija ḍolī. rāma mātu mṛdu bānī bōlī. 4.

When the people, who accompanied Bharat in the procession, saw this exemplary example of devotion and love shown by him for Lord Ram, and his passion for doing sacrifice and penance to atone for his sins, all of them were overwhelmed by similar emotions themselves (even as they felt embarrassed, guilty and ashamed of themselves, that while Bharat walked barefoot, they rode vehicles), and hence, they abandoned their horses, elephants, chariots and other means of transport, and stepped down to walk alongside Bharat. (3)

When mother Kaushalya (rāma mātu) observed this development, she ordered that her palanquin be brought near Bharat, and then she addressed him most affectionately, using sweet words. (4)

तात चढ़हु रथ बलि महतारी । होइहि प्रिय परिवारु दुखारी ॥ ५ ॥
तुम्हरे चलत चलिहि सबु लोगू । सकल सोक कृस नहिं मग जोगू ॥ ६ ॥

tāta caṛhahu ratha bali mahatārī. hō'ihi priya parivāru dukhārī. 5.
tumharēm calata calihi sabu lōgū. sakala sōka kṛsa nahim maga jōgū. 6.

Kaushalya told Bharat: 'My dear son (tāta), please board the chariot, as it would give solace and comfort to all those who love you, including your friends, kith and kin, as well as your family members. [They are very sad and upset that you are subjecting yourself to unnecessary sufferings by walking on foot. Further, this will slow down our progress, as it is faster to move on some kind of vehicle, or by mounting a horse or an elephant than by travelling on foot.] (5)

You see, when the people saw you walking on foot, they abandoned their vehicles and mounts and have also started walking alongside you. They are already overcome with

grief and sadness which has made them weak and unfit for the long and arduous journey on foot; this mode of travel on foot is unsuitable for them.' (6)

सिर धरि बचन चरन सिरु नाई । रथ चढ़ि चलत भए दोउ भाई ॥ ७ ॥

तमसा प्रथम दिवस करि बासू । दूसर गोमति तीर निवासू ॥ ८ ॥

sira dhari bacana carana siru nā'ī. ratha caḍhi calata bha'ē dō'u bhā'ī. 7.
tamasā prathama divasa kari bāsū. dūsara gōmati tīra nivāsū. 8.

When the two brothers (Bharat and Shatrughan) heard mother Kaushalya's advice, they obeyed it reverentially by bowing their heads at her feet, and immediately they boarded a chariot to move forward.¹ (7)

The first day's halt was on the banks of river Tamsa (where Lord Ram too had made a night's halt)², and the next day's (i.e. second day's) halt was on the banks of river Gomti³. (8)

[Note—¹A very interesting observation can be made here. We have just a while ago read that taking into cognizance that Lord Ram had gone to the forest on foot, Bharat decided that he would also go on foot—apropos: Chaupai line no. 2 that follows Doha no. 187 herein above. But now we read that on the instructions of mother Kaushalya he has decided to board a chariot. Later on as we move ahead in our narration of this magnificent story we shall read that Bharat once again started walking barefoot, resulting in blisters forming on the sole of his feet—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 203; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 204.

Now, how do we reconcile it? Well, Bharat agreed to ride the chariot soon after leaving Ayodhya for four reasons—viz. (i) he did not want to disobey mother Kaushalya publicly, (ii) he realized that her argument that the people who have started walking alongside him would be subjected to great sufferings and difficulties as they were weak and unfit for the long journey ahead meant sense and had logic behind it, (iii) that this was slowing down their progress and hindering fast movement, (iv) and above all, even Lord Ram had boarded a chariot sent by king Dasrath, and driven by Sumantra, on his way out of Ayodhya (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 81 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 83).

Later on, after reaching the banks of river Ganges, Bharat learnt that Lord Ram had abandoned the chariot on its bank and thereafter walked on foot*, he too decided to follow in the Lord's footsteps by undertaking the rest of the journey on foot#. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, *Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 100; # Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 203.}

In this way, Bharat succeeded in obeying mother Kaushalya by boarding the chariot, and then fulfilling his own desire to do penance by walking on foot.

²Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 84.

³Lord Ram had made the second day's halt on the banks of river Ganges where he had met Guha Nishad. But Bharat would reach there on the fourth day. His second day's

halt was on the banks of river Gomti, and third day's on the banks of river Sai (see Chaupai line no. 1 that follows Doha no. 188 herein below).

The reason for Bharat's slow progress as compared to Lord Ram's is that while the Lord was alone and moved swiftly on the chariot driven by Sumantra, Bharat was accompanied by a large retinue of men and animals, citizens, sages, family members, army, support staff, as well as horses, elephants and mules to carry food, tents, arms and other items of logistics. This virtually dragged him down and slowed down his progress.]

दो०. पय अहार फल असन एक निसि भोजन एक लोग ।

करत राम हित नेम ब्रत परिहरि भूषन भोग ॥ १८८ ॥

dōhā.

paya ahāra phala asana ēka nisi bhōjana ēka lōga.

karata rāma hita nēma brata parihari bhūṣana bhōga. 188.

Everyone was observing austerity and doing penance in his or her own way by sustaining themselves on milk or eating fruits, while some ate a meal only once a day at night (before retiring to sleep).

Everyone discarded all things of luxury, pleasure and comfort, and observed fasting, religious vows and austerities for the sake of Lord Ram¹. They abandoned their ornaments and wore only ordinary clothes (to show their solidarity with the Lord who too had abandoned all ornaments and royal robes at the time of proceeding to the forest²). (Doha no. 188)

[Note—¹The citizens had all along been following this life of austerities and penances ever since Lord Ram went to the forest—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 86.

²Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 79 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it; and (ii) Doha no. 165.]

चौ०. सई तीर बसि चले बिहाने । सुंगबेरपुर सब निअराने ॥ १ ॥

समाचार सब सुने निषादा । हृदयँ बिचार करइ सबिषादा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sa'ī tīra basi calē bihānē. sṛṅgabērapura saba ni'arānē. 1.

samācāra saba sunē niṣādā. hṛdayam' bicāra kara'i sabiṣādā. 2.

Making a halt on the banks of river Sai, the procession moved ahead the next morning and arrived near Sringberpur (which was on the fourth day after departure from Ayodhya). (1)

When Guha Nishad heard all about it (i.e. of the arrival of Bharat with a huge procession that included a sizable army), he became pensive and worried, wondering at the real intentions of Bharat. (2)

कारन कवन भरतु बन जाहीं । है कछु कपट भाउ मन माहीं ॥ ३ ॥
जौं पै जियँ न होति कुटिलाई । तौ कत लीन्ह संग कटकाई ॥ ४ ॥

kārana kavana bharatu bana jāhīm. hai kachu kapaṭa bhā'u mana māhīm. 3.
jaum̐ pai jiyam̐ na hōti kuṭilā'ī. tau kata līnha saṅga kaṭakā'ī. 4.

Nishad wondered why Bharat was going to the forest at all, what motive did he have?
'Surely', he rued, 'there was some secret agenda and evil design in his
(Bharat's) mind. (3)

If he (Bharat) had no evil intentions in his Mana (heart and mind), then why is he
accompanied by a huge army contingent? (4)

जानहिं सानुज रामहि मारी । करउँ अकंटक राजु सुखारी ॥ ५ ॥
भरत न राजनीति उर आनी । तब कलंकु अब जीवन हानी ॥ ६ ॥

jānahīm sānuja rāmaḥi mārī. kara'um̐ akaṇṭaka rāju sukhārī. 5.
bharata na rājanīti ura ānī. taba kalaṅku aba jīvana hānī. 6.

He thinks that he would kill Lord Ram and his younger brother (Laxman) in a battle
so that he (Bharat) can rule the kingdom comfortably, without the fear of any
opposition or claim from anyone who might challenge his authority. (5)

Surely, Bharat is acting stupidly as he has no idea of principles of polity and norms of
civil behaviour. Earlier he had to merely face the prospect of having ignominy and
embarrassment because he was the reason why Lord Ram was sent to the forest, and if
he had accepted the throne it would have added to his infamy and condemnation, but
now he faces the prospect of death and mass loss of life.

[Why? This is answered in the next verse no. 7 herein below.] (6)

सकल सुरासुर जुरहिं जुझारा । रामहि समर न जीतनिहारा ॥ ७ ॥
का आचरजु भरतु अस करहीं । नहिं बिष बेलि अमिअ फल फरहीं ॥ ८ ॥

sakala surāsura jurahīm jujhārā. rāmaḥi samara na jītanihārā. 7.
kā ācaraju bharatu asa karahīm. nahīm biṣa bēli ami'a phala pharahīm. 8.

Even if the whole world and its armies join hands to fight Lord Ram, they would
never be able to defeat the Lord and win the battle¹. (7)

What wonder is there if Bharat thinks and acts in this way, because a fruit filled with
ambrosia is never born in a creeper that bears poisonous fruits.² (8)

[Note—¹This is why Nishad calls Bharat stupid if the latter thinks he would defeat Lord Ram and Laxman in a battle and either imprison them or kill them so that he (Bharat) can rule the kingdom of Ayodhya un-opposed. This would be the greatest folly that Bharat would ever make in his life, for it would mean not only his own death but also mass slaughter of all his army if they ever commit the grave error of fighting Lord Ram.

It is asserted later on in Ram Charit Manas that Laxman alone is competent to defeat even the mightiest of armies, and so there is no question of him and Lord Ram being defeated in any battle by Bharat and his army—refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 230; (b) Sundar Kand, (ii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 44; (c) Lanka Kand, (iii) Chaupai line no. 14 that precedes Doha no. 75.

²Here, Nishad refers to Bharat's mother Kaikeyi. He means to say that after all Bharat is the son of an evil mother who was so reckless, vile, merciless and thoughtless that she had no compunctions in sending Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman to the forest, but also became the cause of death of her husband that made her a widow. Being her son, there is no wonder therefore that Bharat too would act recklessly and without giving thought to the consequences of his rash actions if he has decided to fight and get rid of Lord Ram so that he can usurp the throne and rule without any opposition.]

दो०. अस बिचारि गुहँ ग्याति सन कहेउ सजग सब होहु ।
हथवाँसहु बोरहु तरनि कीजिअ घाटारोहु ॥ १८९ ॥

dōhā.

asa bicāri guham' gyāti sana kahē'u sajaga saba hōhu.
hathavāṁśahu bōrahu tarani kīji'a ghāṭārōhu. 189.

With this thought in his mind, Guha Nishad summoned all his kinsmen and ordered them to become alert and make arrangements so that Bharat is not able to cross the river (Ganges).

In order to do this, he asked his men to hide their boats and oars by submerging them underwater, and at the same time block all the access points to the river and secure its bank from where anyone could possibly get across to the other side. (Doha no. 189)

चौ०. होहु सँजोइल रोकहु घाटा । ठाटहु सकल मरै के ठाटा ॥ १ ॥
सनमुख लोह भरत सन लेऊँ । जिअत न सुरसरि उतरन देऊँ ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

hōhu samjō'ila rōkahu ghāṭā. ṭhāṭahu sakala marai kē ṭhāṭā. 1.
sanamukha lōha bharata sana lē'ūṁ. ji'ata na surasari utarana dē'ūṁ. 2.

Guha Nishad instructed his kinsmen: 'All of you, arm yourselves and block all access to the river and its banks. Don't dither, and be prepared to die a noble warrior's death (in case a vicious battle ensues between Bharat's army and us, for it is quite possible

we would have to sacrifice ourselves and attain martyrdom because we are ill-equipped and outnumbered to face a well-trained and far superior army of Ayodhya which consists of war veterans).' (1)

Nevertheless, I will face Bharat determinedly up front, and show my mettle with an iron hand in an open combat, but never let him cross the river Ganges as long as we are alive. (2)

समर मरनु पुनि सुरसरि तीरा । राम काजु छनभंगु सरीरा ॥ ३ ॥
भरत भाइ नृपु में जन नीचू । बड़ें भाग असि पाइअ मीचू ॥ ४ ॥

samara maranu puni surasari tīrā. rāma kāju chanabhaṅgu sarīrā. 3.
bharata bhā'i nṛpu mair̥ṁ jana nīcū. baṛēm bhāga asi pā'i'a mīcū. 4.

What a glorious death it would be—to die in combat, and that too on the banks of the holy river Ganges, for, after all, this body will have to die one day as it is mortal and perishable, but what more glorious way would it be to die than if that death comes while serving Lord Ram and his cause. (3)

On the one hand there is Bharat who is a king and a brother of Lord Ram, and compared to him, on the other hand, I am merely a humble and ordinary servant of the Lord. It is indeed my (as well as yours) exceptionally good fortune that we would embrace such a glorious death that rarely comes to a living being! [So therefore, don't hesitate or have any fear. Treat this opportunity as god-sent and do your duties with zeal and enthusiasm.]¹ (4)

[Note—¹Bharat exhorts his people to bravely face Bharat and be ready to sacrifice their lives in the service of Lord Ram. He tells them that they would gain both ways, for if they succeed in stopping Bharat then their fame would spread like wildfire through all corners of the world for having defeated an army as mighty as that of Ayodhya, and in case they die then too they will get immense fame and glory for having died fighting like a brave warrior, that too on the banks of the holy river Ganges, because, one, death in the battle field is the best type of death for a warrior, and two, all those who die near Ganges have the opportunity to attain deliverance from this mortal world. To add to this glory and fame is the opportunity to serve Lord Ram, for remember, he is our Lord and friend, and service to one's Lord and a friend in need is one of the best deeds a person can do in his life. This latter idea is explicitly expressed by Nishad in the verses that follow herein below.]

स्वामि काज करिहउँ रन रारी । जस धवलिहउँ भुवन दस चारी ॥ ५ ॥
तजउँ प्रान रघुनाथ निहोरें । दुहूँ हाथ मुद मोदक मोरें ॥ ६ ॥

svāmi kāja kariha'um̐ rana rārī. jasa dhavaliha'um̐ bhuvana dasa cārī. 5.
taja'um̐ prāna raghunātha nihōrēm̐. duhū'm̐ hātha muda mōdaka mōrēm̐. 6.

By serving our Lord (i.e. Lord Ram) and fighting for him in the battle-field is the best kind of service you and I can do, and this exemplary deed of ours would make the flag of our fame and glory fly high in all the fourteen divisions of the world¹. (5)

The fact that I am readying to sacrifice my life in the service of Lord Ram gives me immense joy and satisfaction as I have a win-win situation, with sweets in both my hands². (6)

[Note—¹The fourteen divisions of the world have been listed as a note appended to Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 98.

²To wit, I will gain both ways, whether I win the battle with Bharat and stop him from crossing the river Ganges, or I die, because if I succeed in preventing Bharat from marching ahead I would be serving my friend and Lord (Sri Ram), as then Bharat would not be able to give trouble to the Lord and fulfill his desire of defeating him in battle in the forest by cornering him with a huge army and then probably imprisoning him, and in case I die then I get deliverance from this mortal world by dying on the banks of river Ganges fighting in a battle, as well as a good name and fame for being loyal to my friend and Lord.

So therefore, I have everything to gain and nothing to lose, and this also applies to you all, my dear kinsmen, friends and companions. Hence, cheer up and get ready for the job at hand.

That dying for the cause of good of someone (in this case Lord Ram) is a blessing is reiterated elsewhere also—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 84; (b) Aranya Kand, (ii) Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 31; (b) Uttar Kand, (iii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 41; (iv) Chaupai line no. 14 that precedes Doha no. 121.

Further, those dying while serving Lord Ram do not actually die but get eternal life and are very dear to the Lord. This is reiterated in Ram Charit Manas, (a) Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 114; and (b) Uttar Kand, (ii) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 8.]

साधु समाज न जाकर लेखा । राम भगत महुँ जासु न रेखा ॥ ७ ॥

जायँ जिअत जग सो महि भारू । जननी जौबन बिटप कुठारू ॥ ८ ॥

sādhū samāja na jākara lēkhā. rāma bhagata mahum̐ jāsu na rēkhā. 7.
jāyam̐ ji'ata jaga sō mahi bhārū. jananī jaubana biṭapa kuṭhārū. 8.

‘Remember this’, Nishad exhorted his kinsmen, ‘a person who is not counted as a saintly and virtuous soul, and who is not regarded as being a devotee of Lord Ram, --- (7)

--- Then verily indeed his life is in vain and like a burden upon the earth, and he has taken birth only to deprive his mother of her youthful charm¹. (8)

[Note—¹After a child’s birth, a woman generally loses quite a lot of her youthful vigour and charm.

A similar idea—that a mother whose children are born as devotees of the Lord is very blessed and fortunate, for otherwise it would have been better for her to remain childless if her off-springs are opposed to the Lord—is reiterated in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 75.]

दो०. बिगत बिषाद निषादपति सबहि बड़ाइ उछाहु ।
सुमिरि राम मागेउ तुरत तरकस धनुष सनाहु ॥ १९० ॥
dōhā.

bigata biṣāda niṣādapati sabahi barhā'i uchāhu.
sumiri rāma māgē'u turata tarakasa dhanuṣa sanāhu. 190.

The Lord of the boatmen community, viz. Guha Nishad, had no regrets in his heart while taking this decision, which he took conscientiously, enthusiastically and with a lot of zeal, and he exhorted and encouraged his companions to treat the situation in a similar way.

Remembering Lord Ram (and invoking his grace and blessings), Nishad immediately asked for his quiver filled with arrows, as well as a bow. (Doha no. 190)

चौ०. बेगहु भाइहु सजहु सँजोऊ । सुनि रजाइ कदराइ न कोऊ ॥ १ ॥
भलेहिं नाथ सब कहहिं सहरषा । एकहिं एक बड़ावइ करषा ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

bēgahu bhā'ihu sajahu saṁjō'ū. suni rajā'i kadarā'i na kō'ū. 1.
bhalēhiṁ nātha saba kahahiṁ saharaṣā. ēkahiṁ ēka barhāva'i karaṣā. 2.

Nishad once again encouraged his kinsmen when he said: 'My dear brothers (bhā'ihu)! Arm yourselves and take charge of your positions immediately; do no dither, do not hesitate, do not have second thoughts or doubts in you mind, have no reluctance or fear in anyway whatsoever (for this is not the time for it; be brave and courageous, and do your duty boldly and confidently, for this is a momentous occasion for all of us to show our solidarity with Lord Ram, as well as to show the world how brave, courageous, valliant, bold and faithful we are as a community)¹.'

Everyone whom Nishad addressed showed their willingness and enthusiasm when they unanimously replied: 'It will be done, oh lord, as you instruct'.

They encouraged and exhorted each other to do their respective duties enthusiastically and with zeal, and to the best of their abilities. (2)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 191 herein below.]

चले निषाद जोहारि जोहारी । सूर सकल रन रूचइ रारी ॥ ३ ॥

सुमिरि राम पद पंकज पनहीं । भाथीं बाँधि चढ़ाइन्हि धनहीं ॥ ४ ॥

calē niṣāda jōhārī jōhārī. sūra sakala rana rūca'i rārī. 3.

sumiri rāma pada paṅkaja panahīm. bhāthīm bām̐dhi caṛhā'inhi dhanahīm. 4.

Every member of the Nishad community (i.e. the boatmen community) paid his respects and vowed allegiance to the leader, the 'Guha Nishad', and departed from there to prepare take up arms and prepare for combat.

Indeed, every one of them was brave, and full of courage and enthusiasm; they longed for battle and would cheerfully engage in it. (3)

Remembering Lord Ram's holy lotus-like feet and mentally bowing their heads before the footwear of the Lord (as a means of seeking his blessings and permission to engage in battle; "sumiri rāma pada paṅkaja panahīm")¹, the members of the Nishad community tied their small quivers around their waists and strung their bows (to make it ready to shoot arrows at short notice). (4)

[Note—¹We have many examples in Ram Charit Manas that when a warrior got ready for battle, or embarked on some important mission on behalf of the Lord, he would first pay his obeisance to Lord Ram by bowing at the Lord's feet and seeking his blessings; this ensured their success. For instance, refer to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Kishkindha Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precede Doha no. 23 (the monkeys and bears at the time of going in search of Sita); (b) Sundar Kand, (ii) Doha no. 17 (Hanuman advised by Sita to keep Lord Ram's holy feet enshrined in his heart as he goes to eat fruits and subsequently burn Lanka to ashes); (c) Lanka Kand, (iii) Sortha no. 17-a (Angad is sent as an emissary to the court of Ravana); (iv) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 39 (at the beginning of the War of Lanka when the Lord's army made its first attack, all the warriors first bowed their heads before the Lord's feet before departure for battle); (v) Doha no. 75 (Laxman goes to fight Meghanad, the son of Ravana).

Lord Ram's feet are as revered and holy as those of Lord Shiva—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 124.

Even Lord Shiva himself pays his obeisance at the holy feet of Lord Ram and reveres them—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 106.

Verily, all the Gods, including the creator Brahma, as well as the great sages pay their respect at the holy feet of Lord Ram—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 22; (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 63.]

अँगरी पहिरि कूँड़ि सिर धरहीं । फरसा बाँस सेल सम करहीं ॥ ५ ॥

एक कुसल अति ओड़न खाँड़े । कूदहिं गगन मनहुँ छिति छाँड़े ॥ ६ ॥

aṁgarī pahiri kūṁḍi sira dharahīm. pharasā bām̐sa sēla sama karahīm. 5.

ēka kusala ati ōḍaṇa khām̐ṛē. kūdahīm gagana manahum̐ chiti chām̐ṛē. 6.

The Nishad warriors donned body armour, and put on iron hoods (i.e. helmets) over their heads. They readied their bamboo (bāmśa) spears and lancets, as well as battering-rams and battle-axes (made of iron, with their handles made of bamboo). (5)

Some of them were skilled in fencing with the use of swords and shields; and many of them were so excited that they jumped and sprang up with such vigour and agility that it gave the impression that they never touched the ground and were always in the air, trying to touch the sky and tear it apart. (6)

निज निज साजु समाजु बनाई । गुह राउतहि जोहारे जाई ॥ ७ ॥
देखि सुभट सब लायक जाने । लै लै नाम सकल सनमाने ॥ ८ ॥

nija nija sāju samāju banā'ī. guha rā'utahi jōhārē jā'ī. 7.
dēkhi subhaṭa saba lāyaka jānē. lai lai nāma sakala sanamānē. 8.

In this way, arranging themselves in groups, all the warriors came once again to pay their respects to their king, Guha Nishad, and to show him that they are all ready to carry out his orders with diligence. (7)

Guha Nishad surveyed the warrior-groups and felt satisfied when he observed that they were all competent in their fields and fit for action.

He formally addressed each of the warriors by his name, and honoured them for their courage and valour¹. (8)

[Note—¹This is a routine practice by military commanders when he gathers his juniors before a battle, calls each of them by his name as a gesture of friendliness and to show that they are all part of the same family, as well as to encourage them and laud their valour, courage and bravery to boost their morale.]

दो०. भाइहु लावहु धोख जनि आजु काज बड़ मोहि ।
सुनि सरोष बोले सुभट बीर अधीर न होहि ॥ १९१ ॥
dōhā.

bhā'ihu lāvahu dhōkha jani āju kāja bara mōhi.
suni sarōṣa bōlē subhaṭa bīra adhīra na hōhi. 191.

Addressing his warriors, Guha Nishad said: 'My brothers (bhā'i), don't please betray my trust in you, don't spare any efforts to fulfill your duties, for this is a crucial juncture in my life and an issue of great importance stands before me.'

Hearing Guha's plea, his kinsmen gallantly assured him of their loyalty and allegiance, telling him: 'Oh Lord, be rest assured of us. Don't lose your spirit and courage, for we shall stand by you spiritedly, and live up to your expectations from us.' (Doha no. 191)

चौ०. राम प्रताप नाथ बल तोरे । करहिं कटकु बिनु भट बिनु घोरे ॥ १ ॥

जीवत पाउ न पाछें धरहीं । रुंड मुंडमय मेदिनि करहीं ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

rāma pratāpa nātha bala tōrē. karahīm kaṭaku binu bhaṭa binu ghōrē. 1.
jīvata pā'u na pāchēm dharahīm. ruṇḍa muṇḍamaya mēdini karahīm. 2.

[The warriors continued to assure their king, Guha Nishad, that he need not worry at all, and that they would fulfill his wishes without doubt—] ‘Lord, by the grace of his majesty, Lord Ram, and encouraged and supported by your own valour, strength and courage, we shall decimate the army (of Bharat) so that not a single soldier survives, and we shall render the horses without their mounts.

[To wit, we shall fight so gallantly that either all the enemy soldiers, whether infantry men or cavalry, would be killed in battle, or they would take recourse to flight.] (1)

We shall not step back while we are alive, and we shall cover the ground with severed heads and dead torsos.’ (2)

दीख निषादनाथ भल टोलू । कहेउ बजाउ जुझारु ढोलू ॥ ३ ॥
एतना कहत छींक भइ बाँए । कहेउ सगुनिअन्ह खेत सुहाए ॥ ४ ॥
बूढु एकु कह सगुन बिचारी । भरतहि मिलिअ न होइहि रारी ॥ ५ ॥
रामहि भरतु मनावन जाहीं । सगुन कहइ अस बिग्रहु नाहीं ॥ ६ ॥

dīkha niṣādanātha bhala ṭolū. kahē'u bajā'u jujhā'ū ḍhōlū. 3.
ētanā kahata chīnka bha'i bāmē. kahē'u saguni'anha khēta suhā'ē. 4.
būḍhu ēku kaha saguna bicārī. bharatahi mili'a na hō'ihī rārī. 5.
rāmahi bharatu manāvana jāhīm. saguna kaha'i asa bigrahu nāhīm. 6.

When the lord of the Nishads (i.e. Guha Nishad) saw the enthusiasm and excitement of his warriors, as well as their readiness and preparation for active combat, he felt reassured and ordered that battle-drums be sounded (to tell Bharat and his army that they are not welcome, and that they must defeat the friends of Lord Ram before they can proceed further in their mission to harm the Lord in the forest). (3)

But no sooner did Guha Nishad give these instructions (to sound the battle-drums and engage in combat) than he sneezed because of a tickling in the left nostrils.

Those who were fired with the zeal of battle decoded this sign as a positive signal of victory. (4)

On the other hand, those who were older in age and more prudent decoded this signal (viz. sneezing from the left nostrils) as a negative sign, declaring that it implied that what Guha Nishad planned to do was wrong, that it would be disastrous, that there should be no battle.

So therefore, they advised him (Guha Nishad) to abandon the idea of combat, and instead meet Bharat in a friendly way. (5)

The elderly men unanimously declared, ‘The omen (of sneezing prior to the present battle) indicates that there would be no combat, that the reason why this combat is being planned is faulty and misconceived, and that, by corollary, it means Bharat has no ill intentions against Lord Ram, he is not opposed to the Lord, he is not going on a mission to fight with the Lord, but to pray to the Lord to forgive him and appeal to him to come back to Ayodhya.

Hence, opposing Bharat would be a gravely sinful act to do on the part of Guha Nishad and his kinsmen.’ (6)

[Note—Here we discover that the same omen is interpreted by two types of people differently. Those who wanted to fight, i.e. those who were young, had excitement in their blood, and wished to prove their valour, saw the omen as a sign of victory, while elderly people who had experience of life, were prudent and patient as they analysed things with a cool head decided the other way, saying that this omen would be disastrous.

The lesson we draw from this seemingly ordinary event is that one should always pay heed to the views of elders, one should always consider the pros and cons of any decision with a cool head after taking into account all the things that may affect the outcome of any action, and not jump to conclusions based on fiery emotions stoked by zeal and excitement that are fanned by the heat of the moment, for more often than not reckless actions based on imaginary premises are disastrous beyond repair.

Just imagine what would have happened if the elders of the society had not intervened and stopped Guha Nishad from engaging in a fierce battle with Bharat who was totally innocent and had a pure heart. Just imagine what a horrible shock it would have been to one and all—to Lord Ram, to Bharat, to the world, and to Guha Nishad himself when he would have realized later on that he had committed an unpardonable error and a heinous crime.

How would history have ever forgiven Guha Nishad for battling with Bharat who held Lord Ram so dear to his heart, especially when Guha proclaims himself to be one of the best friends of the Lord?]

सुनि गुह कहइ नीक कह बूढ़ा । सहसा करि पछिताहिं बिमूढ़ा ॥ ७ ॥

भरत सुभाउ सीलु बिनु बूझें । बड़ि हित हानि जानि बिनु जूझें ॥ ८ ॥

sunī guha kaha'i nīka kaha būrḥā. sahasā kari pachitāhīm bimūrḥā. 7.
bharata subhā'u sīlu binu būjhēm. baḍi hita hāni jāni binu jūjhēm. 8.

When Guha Nishad heard what the elders had said, he thought for a moment and agreed with them (because they had experience of life, were experts in deciphering such omens, and were adept in interpreting natural signs), declaring that that these old people were saying the right thing (nīka kaha būrḥā).

Indeed it is true that it is foolish to take a hasty decision and act on it without due diligence, for one would have to repent later on. (7)

Truly, without first ascertaining Bharat's nature, his intentions and his character, it is a great folly, height of stupidity, and detrimental to one's own good to engage in

battle with him just because one is driven by imaginary fears that are based on false and unverified premise. (8)

दो०. गहहु घाट भट समिटि सब लेउँ मरम मिलि जाइ ।
बूझि मित्र अरि मध्य गति तस तब करिहउँ आइ ॥ १९२ ॥

dōhā.

gahahu ghāṭa bhaṭa samiṭi saba lē'um̐ marama mili jā'i.
būjhi mitra ari madhya gati tasa taba kariha'um̐ ā'i. 192.

With these thought in his mind, Guha Nishad instructed his warriors as follows: 'You warriors must go and quietly block the river banks and seize all the access points to the river, while I would go and meet Bharat to ascertain his intentions and plans.

I will determine if he is a friend or a foe, or whether or not he is certain yet as what to do and how to treat Lord Ram, and then I shall come back and decide the next course of our action. [Till then, please get ready to hold your ground and fortify yourself.] (Doha no. 192)

चौ०. लखब सनेहु सुभायँ सुहाएँ । बैरु प्रीति नहिं दुरइँ दुराएँ ॥ १ ॥
अस कहि भेंट सँजोवन लागे । कंद मूल फल खग मृग मागे ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

lakhaba sanēhu subhāyam̐ suhā'ēm̐. bairu prīti nahim̐ dura'im̐ durā'ēm̐. 1.
asa kahi bhēṇṭa sam̐jōvana lāgē. kanda mūla phala khaga mṛga māgē. 2.

Let me first determine Bharat's nature and intentions, whether he has an affable nature, whether he is amiable, whether he has affection for Lord Ram and is friendly inclined towards him, for it is not possible for a person to conceal his friendly disposition or his inimical attitude for someone as any such emotions, either way, is revealed by subtle signs of his behaviour, words and gestures.' (1)

Saying this, Guha Nishad started collecting gifts or presents that he would take along to meet Bharat, such as edible roots and stems, fruits, birds and deer¹. (2)

[Note—¹It ought to be remarked here that the Nishad community were fishermen and hunters who ate fish and flesh of animals they hunted. They also partook of products of the countryside and forests, such as edible roots and stems, as well as fruits. When a king goes to meet another king who comes a-visiting, the host king would take along things that are unique to his kingdom as special gifts for the guest king. So therefore, Guha Nishad took along such things as were the natural products of his realm, such as roots, stems, fruits, and birds and deer, either alive or their meat.]

मीन पीन पाठीन पुराने । भरि भरि भार कहारन्ह आने ॥ ३ ॥
मिलन साजु सजि मिलन सिधाए । मंगल मूल सगुन सुभ पाए ॥ ४ ॥

mīna pīna pāṭhīna purānē. bhari bhari bhāra kahāranha ānē. 3.
milana sāju saji milana sidhā'ē. maṅgala mūla saguna subha pā'ē. 4.

On his (Guha's) instructions, porters brought in vessels filled with fish that were large and fat, as well as animals and birds (i.e. their meat). (3)

After all articles of gift were ready and properly arranged, Guha Nishad departed to meet Bharat. On the way he observed many auspicious signs (that indicated to him that he has made a right decision to go and meet Bharat, that his mission would be successful, and that he would be warmly welcomed by Bharat). (4)

देखि दूरि तें कहि निज नामू । कीन्ह मुनीसहि दंड प्रनामू ॥ ५ ॥
जानि रामप्रिय दीन्हि असीसा । भरतहि कहेउ बुझाइ मुनीसा ॥ ६ ॥

dēkhi dūri tēm kahi nija nāmū. kīnha munīsahi daṇḍa pranāmū. 5.
jāni rāmapriya dīnhi asīsā. bharatahi kahē'u bujhā'i munīsā. 6.

When he saw Bharat and his party, Guha Nishad called out his own name from a distance¹ to introduce himself even as he prostrated on the ground (daṇḍa pranām) before the sage (Vasistha) to pay his obeisance to the latter². (5)

Realizing that he (Guha Nishad) was very dear to Lord Ram, the sage blessed him, and then the sage explained everything to Bharat regarding Nishad³. (6)

[Note—¹When Vibhishan, the brother of the demon king Ravana, came to meet Lord Ram, he too bowed before the Lord 'from a distance' and 'introduced himself by saying that he was a brother of Ravana'—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2, 6-8 that precede Doha no. 45, and Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 46.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 243.

³How did sage Vasistha come to know that Guha Nishad was a friend of Lord Ram? The answer is this: When Sumantra returned to Ayodhya after dropping Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman on the banks of river Ganges, it is quite natural that he had briefed the sage in detail about everything that happened after he left Ayodhya with the chariot as ordered by king Dasrath. During this briefing, it is obvious that Sumantra told sage Vasistha everything about Nishad in great detail, of how Nishad had befriended Lord Ram and had crossed to the other side of the river with the Lord to accompany him on his onwards journey, of how he met Sumantra while he was returning home after sometimes upon being sent back by Lord Ram, and how he had helped Sumantra to drive back to Ayodhya by sending some of his friends to accompany him on the chariot when he found that the chief minister was not in a fit state of mind to drive alone.

Besides this, we must not forget that Ayodhya was a mighty kingdom of its time, and as was the routine matter for even small kingdoms let alone big ones, spies

were appointed in every direction to report on developments that directly affected the kingdom and its affairs. The realm of Guha Nishad, i.e. Sringeripur, was in the vicinity of the city of Ayodhya, and therefore there is no wonder that everything about Guha Nishad was well known by the chief advisors of the kingdom of Ayodhya, including, of course, sage Vasistha.]

राम सखा सुनि संदनु त्यागा । चले उतरि उमगत अनुरागा ॥ ७ ॥
गाउँ जाति गुहँ नाउँ सुनाई । कीन्ह जोहारु माथ महि लाई ॥ ८ ॥

rāma sakhā suni sandanu tyāgā. calē utari umagata anurāgā. 7.
gā'um' jāti guham' nā'um' sunā'ī. kīnha jōhāru mātha mahi lā'ī. 8.

Hearing (from sage Vasistha) that he (Guha Nishad) was a friend of Lord Ram, Bharat immediately got down from his chariot and went forward to meet him even as his heart was overwhelmed with warmth and affection for his host (Guha Nishad). (7)

Guha introduced himself by telling Bharat the name of his village (Sringeripur), his caste (fishermen and boatmen community), and his name even as he paid his obeisance by putting his head on the ground before Bharat¹. (8)

[Note—¹As we have noted in the comment appended to verse no. 5 herein above, when Vibhishan had come to meet Lord Ram, he too had introduced himself by telling the Lord that he is a brother of the demon king of Lanka, i.e. Ravana, before falling down to prostrate before the Lord to pay his obeisance to him. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 45—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 46.}]

दो०. करत दंडवत देखि तेहि भरत लीन्ह उर लाइ ।
मनहुँ लखन सन भेंट भइ प्रेमु न हृदयँ समाइ ॥ १९३ ॥
dōhā.

karata daṇḍavata dēkhi tēhi bharata līnha ura lā'i.
manahum' lakhana sana bhēṇṭa bha'i prēmu na hṛdayam' samā'i. 193.

When Bharat saw Guha Nishad prostrating before him to pay his obeisance, he (Bharat) immediately lifted him and embraced him most affectionately as if he has met Laxman. Affection for Guha surged so much in Bharat's heart that it seemed he could not contain it.

[To wit, Bharat's heart overflowed with affection for Nishad in the same way as it would have been had Bharat met Laxman personally.]¹ (Doha no. 193)

[Note—¹The cordial meeting between Bharat and Guha Nishad has also been described by sage Veda Vyas in his version of the Ramayana known as the “Adhyatma Ramayan”, in its Ayodhya Kand, Canto 8, verse nos. 18-24.]

चौ०. भेंटत भरतु ताहि अति प्रीती । लोग सिहाहिं प्रेम कै रीती ॥ १ ॥
 धन्य धन्य धुनि मंगल मूला । सुर सराहि तेहि बरिसहिं फूला ॥ २ ॥
 caupāī.

bhēṇṭata bharatu tāhi ati prīti. lōga sihāhiṁ prēma kai rīti. 1.
 dhan'ya dhan'ya dhuni maṅgala mūlā. sura sarāhi tēhi barisahim phūlā. 2.

Bharat met him (Guha Nishad) most cordially and affectionately so much so that the people (who witnessed their meeting) were all praise for them, and how they honoured the tradition of mutual respect and affection for each other¹. (1)

The gods in the heaven too applauded them (Bharat and Guha Nishad), unanimously cheering them and showering flowers upon them to show their pleasure¹. (2)

[Note—¹The people appreciated how both of them showed respect and courtesy to each other, for they were meeting as friends and equals who loved Lord Ram in equal measure, and who were sovereigns of their respective domains, and not as adversaries who wished to settle some old scores, or as one being superior to the other.

In this context, one can also refer to Tulsidas' 'Vinai Patrika', verse nos. 164 and 215.

²As we proceed with our reading of this fascinating story of the Ram Charit Manas, we would come to the point when Bharat and Lord Ram meet—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 240.

At this juncture we will note that these gods were initially reluctant in showing their happiness by showering flowers upon the two brothers as they have done when Bharat meets Guha Nishad, but they showered flowers only after their guru, sage Brihaspati, intervened and explained to them that they have nothing to fear from Bharat meeting Lord Ram, as Bharat was a great devotee of the Lord and would never do anything against the Lord's wish*. Hence, though Bharat wants Lord Ram to go back to Ayodhya out of the former's love for the latter, but he would eventually accept the Lord's commands to have patience as the Lord was obliged to honour the words he had given to his father that he would live in the forest for fourteen years, and more important than that was the Lord's responsibility, as the Supreme Lord of the creation, to eliminate the demons who were causing immense and endless sufferings for the Lord's creatures. Being a true devotee of Lord Ram, Bharat felt it was his natural and moral duty not to insist too much and compel the Lord to do anything that would be against the Lord's wishes#.

{*Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 217—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 220; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 241; and (iii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 265—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 266.

#Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 268—to Doha no. 269.}]

लोक बेद सब भाँतिहिं नीचा । जासु छाँह छुड़ लेइअ सींचा ॥ ३ ॥
 तेहि भरि अंक राम लघु भ्राता । मिलत पुलक परिपूरित गाता ॥ ४ ॥

lōka bēda saba bhāmṭihīm nīcā. jāsu chāmṭha chu'i lē'i'a sīncā. 3.
tēhi bhari aṅka rāma laghu bhrātā. milata pulaka paripūrta gātā. 4.

It is so honourable and a meritorious thing that is worthy of immense praise and laurels that a person (i.e. Guha Nishad) who belonged to a community (of boatmen who were traditionally fishermen and hunters) that is traditionally considered lowly by all, the general society as well as the Vedas (scriptures), so much so that if such a person's shadow falls upon someone else then the latter would consider himself impure and would need to sprinkle water on himself for purification, --- (3)

--- Such a person was met by the younger brother of Lord Ram (i.e. Bharat) who stretched his arms to welcome him and gave him a close embrace while feeling so glad by this meeting that his whole body was thrilled.¹ (4)

[Note—¹The story of Ram Charit Manas teaches us how Lord Ram and his near and dear ones had treated every person in the world as equals, without distinction of their caste, creed or station in society, with only one factor to be considered—which was the degree of purity of heart, sincerity of purpose, cleanliness of thoughts, and the virtue of affection that the other person had.

Prior to Bharat, even Lord Ram had shown similar friendliness to Guha Nishad—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 88 where we read that Lord Ram had welcomed Guha and made him sit close to him.

Later on in the story we shall read that at the time of returning to Ayodhya from Lanka, Lord Ram went to Sringeripur especially with the purpose of meeting Guha, and at that time the Lord had embraced him very affectionately—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 11-12 and Chanda line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 121.

We have other instances also where Lord Ram has embraced and showed great respect to others irrespective who they were, whether they were as exalted as sage Narad or low in social standing such as Vibhishan (brother of Ravana) and Hanuman (a member of the monkey race that lived in Kishkindha). {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Aranya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 10-11 that precede Doha no. 41 (Narad); (b) Kishkindha Kand, (ii) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 3; (c) Sundar Kand, (iii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 33 (Hanuman); and (iv) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 46 (Vibhishan).}

राम राम कहि जे जमुहाहीं । तिन्हि न पाप पुंज समुहाहीं ॥ ५ ॥

यह तौ राम लाइ उर लीन्हा । कुल समेत जगु पावन कीन्हा ॥ ६ ॥

rāma rāma kahi jē jamuhāhīm. tinhahi na pāpa punja samuhāhīm. 5.
yaha tau rāma lā'i ura līnhā. kula samēta jagu pāvana kīnhā. 6.

Even those people who utter the holy name of Lord Ram, viz. 'Ram, Ram', while yawning become so holy themselves that no kind of sin, how great their cluster might be, would be able to harm them¹. (5)

As for this man (i.e. Guha Nishad) who was embraced by Lord Ram himself, truly he was extremely fortunate and blessed so much so that not only he but his entire family of the current generation as well as those of the past generations became purified and worthy of attaining deliverance. (6)

[Note—¹A similar idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 311.

The glory and spiritual importance of Lord Ram's holy name has been elaborately described in Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 19—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 28; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 2-6 that precede Doha no. 46; (b) Uttar Kand, (iii) Doha no. 124-a.]

करमनास जलु सुरसरि परई । तेहि को कहहु सीस नहिं धरई ॥ ७ ॥
उलटा नामु जपत जगु जाना । बालमीकि भए ब्रह्म समाना ॥ ८ ॥

karamanāsa jalu surasari para'ī. tēhi kō kahahu sīsa nahim dhara'ī. 7.
ulaṭā nāmu japata jagu jānā. bālamīki bha'e brahma samānā. 8.

It is just like the case of the water of some dirty stream, such as the one known as 'Karmanasa' (literally meaning the water which is so filthy that if one touches it then all merit of one's good deeds are nullified, and the person would become dirty himself), falling in the water of the holy river Ganges that is reputed to be all-purifying. Say, in this situation, who will not treat the water of river Ganges as being holy and purifying just because the dirty water of the Karmanasa falls into it?¹ (7)

Verily indeed, the holy name of Lord Ram is so powerful that even by repeating it in the reverse order, Valmiki (who was originally a hunter) turned into a holy and revered sage who became renowned in the world as being equivalent to and as exalted as the supreme Brahm himself². (8)

[Note—¹To wit, the river Ganges is so pure and holy that nothing can make it impure and unholy. On the contrary, the impure water of the river Karmanasa itself is rendered pure after it merges with the water of the Ganges. This example is cited to show that though Guha Nishad was regarded as lowly by the society and the Vedas, but when he met Lord Ram he was rendered pure and worthy of respect as any other senior member of the upper class in the society.

This idea has a great ramification for all others—for it implies that no matter how sinful and fallen a person is, but if he surrenders himself before Lord Ram and accepts the Lord as his saviour and redeemer, then the person immediately is granted deliverance from all his sufferings and sorrows. This is the solemn promise of Lord Ram himself and declared by him in connection with Vibhishan—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 43—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 44.

It is further reiterated by Lord Ram in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 43—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 45; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 86—to Doha no. 87.

²Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 19.

The whole story of how Valmiki attained this exalted stature is narrated in detail in Veda Vyas' "Adhyatma Ramayan", Ayodhya Kand, Canto 6, verse nos. 64-88.]

दो०. स्वपच सबर खस जमन जड़ पावँर कोल किरात ।
रामु कहत पावन परम होत भुवन बिख्यात ॥ १९४ ॥

dōhā.

svapaca sabara khasa jamana jara pāvamra kōla kirāta.
rāmu kahata pāvana parama hōta bhuvana bikhyāta. 194.

Even those who are treated as outcastes and pariahs by the civilized society, such as those who are classified as 'Swapacha', 'Shabar', 'Khasa', 'Yaman', 'Jada', 'Paawar', 'Kola' and 'Kirat'—they too acquire fame and become pure and worthy of praise in the whole world by the virtue of their saying the holy and purifying name of the Lord, viz. the word 'Ram (rām)'¹. (Doha no. 194)

[Note—¹A similar verse that expresses the same idea is found in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 130.

The glory of Lord Ram's holy name is also extolled in the Purans, e.g. Padma Puran, Patal Khand, Chapter no. 35, verse nos. 2-3, and Chapter no. 37, verse nos. 51-56.

The 'Swapacha': These are ancient tribes who are known to eat even flesh of dogs.

There is a legendary story that there was a Swapcha devotee of the Lord, and Yudhisthir's (of Mahabharat) fire sacrifice was completed only when he ate sanctified food offered by this Swapcha. Incidentally, the name of this Swapcha was also Valmiki.

The 'Shabar' is the outcast tribe living in the forests and foothills in south of India. These people are also known as 'Bhils'.

One of its members was the famous lady by the name of Shabari who was a great devotee of Lord Ram, and the Lord had visited her and ate plums and fruits provided by her as refreshment to the Lord. Later on, Lord Ram had preached her the nine principles of Bhakti (devotion), and at the end of his visit Shabari left her mortal body and was granted deliverance, salvation and emancipation by the Lord.

This episode is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 34—to Doha no. 36.

There is a story in Padma Puran, Patal Khanda, Chapter 20 which says that there was a man living in the region of Magadha in central India in ancient times; his name was 'Shabar' and he belonged to a race called Pulkas. He was a savage who killed and looted people; he also was full of all sorts of vices, such as jealousy, greed, anger, indulgences in sensual pleasures etc. He enjoyed robbing pilgrims and raping their women. At the time of his death, messengers of Yama, the god of hell, came and tied him in shackles. As they were dragging this wicked fellow to hell, a holy man saw his precarious condition and developed sympathy for him. He immediately

brought a 'Shaligram stone' (a rounded stone regarded as a symbol of Lord Vishnu) and touched the head of the sinful Shabar with it, and at the same time put some sanctified water containing leaves of the holy Tulsi (Basil) plant in his mouth while pronouncing the holy name of Lord Ram. No sooner had this been done but the messengers of Yama left the dead man alone and went away. Then, by the virtue of hearing Lord Ram's holy name, Shabar went to heaven.

The 'Khasa' is a hilly tribe dwelling in northern India. They too are regarded as outcastes as they survive by hunting and eating meat of dead animals. They too were robbers and hunters in ancient times.

The 'Yamans' are similarly those who live a sinful life, never following any religious vows. The story of one such Yaman who found liberation and deliverance because at the time of death he had uttered a curse word "Haraam" of which 'Raam' was a part, and by the virtue of this fact he got deliverance. This incident finds mention in Kavitawali Ramayan, Uttar Kand, verse no. 76.

The words 'Jada', 'Paawar' etc. refer to all such tribes and communities that the civil society regards as un-cultured and savage.

The 'Kola and Kirat' were hill-dwelling tribes living primarily in the mountains and forests surrounding Chitrakoot. Like others, they too were hunters and flesh eaters. These people had met Lord Ram when he went to live in Chitrakoot, and they had served him with fruits and other kinds of refreshments. They offered their services to the Lord and protected him, Sita and Laxman as long as they lived there. The Lord had reciprocated their affection for him and made them eligible for great spiritual honours. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 135—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 137.

The 'Kirats', the 'Kolas', the 'Guhas' (those who lived in caves), the 'Nishads' (the boatmen community), the 'Bhils' etc.—When Lord Ram lived in the forest, these tribals and forest dwelling people had served the Lord in many ways. The company of the Lord and service rendered to him had purified these souls for all times to come.]

चौ०. नहिं अचिरिजु जुग जुग चलि आई । केहि न दीन्हि रघुबीर बड़ाई ॥ १ ॥

राम नाम महिमा सुर कहहीं । सुनि सुनि अवधलोग सुख लहहीं ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

nahim aciriju juga juga cali āī. kēhi na dīnhi raghubīra baṛāī. 1.

rāma nāma mahimā sura kahahīm. suni suni avadhalōga sukhu lahahīm. 2.

There is no wonder in the fact, as it has been known to be such down the ages, that there is no one who has not acquired glories and became exalted by coming into contact with Lord Ram (as was the case of Guha Nishad in the present case). (1)

The majesty, greatness, the mystical powers and other such glories of Lord Ram's holy name have been extolled and praised by the gods, and the citizens of Ayodhya as well as the world at large find happiness and joy when they hear it. [It is because it

provides them with an easy means to attain liberation and deliverance from this mortal world, and find salvation and emancipation for their souls.]¹ (2)

[Note—¹There are two aspects that are being highlighted here—one is the benefits and glories that one gets when he connects with Lord Ram, and the other is the benefits and glories that are got by remembering the Lord and saying his holy name. While it may be a bit difficult for one to rise high enough from the spiritual perspective so that he can connect with the Lord at the level of super consciousness as is achieved during higher stages of Yoga (meditation), but it is very easy to utter the holy name ‘Ram’ of the Lord to get the same spiritual benefit.

The holy name of Lord Ram can be uttered any time and under any circumstance, as is evident when a tired person would say ‘Ram’ involuntarily while yawning (apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 194 herein above), or an illiterate and ignorant person repeats the Lord’s holy name without paying attention as to whether is saying it properly by pronouncing the letters correctly in a forward manner (i.e. ‘Ra’ followed by ‘Ma’), or in backwards manner in the reverse order (i.e. ‘Ma’ followed by ‘Ra’). The reason is that if one repeats the word ‘Ram’ again and again, it becomes like a wheel rotating continuously, in a cyclic manner, with both the letters following each other in succession so quickly that it is not possible to distinguish which is said first and which last, but the spiritual benefits are the same (apropos: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 28; and (b) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 194).

Earlier, we have read in Ram Charit Manas how and why Lord Ram’s holy name is more important and by far the easiest method available to an ordinary person seeking liberation and deliverance as compared to one’s direct contact with the Lord—apropos: Baal Kand, Doha no. 23—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 26.]

रामसखहि मिलि भरत सप्रेमा । पूँछी कुसल सुमंगल खेमा ॥ ३ ॥
देखि भरत कर सीलु सनेहू । भा निषाद तेहि समय बिदेहू ॥ ४ ॥

rāmasakhahi mili bharata saprēmā. pūṁchī kusala sumāṅgala khēmā. 3.
dēkhi bharata kara sīlu sanēhū. bhā niṣāda tēhi samaya bidēhū. 4.

Bharat met the friend of Lord Ram (i.e. Guha Nishad) very cordially and affectionately, enquiring about his welfare, health, happiness and general well-being. (3)

When Nishad perceived Bharat’s exemplary courteousness and civility, as well as his affectionate and friendly nature, he was so overwhelmed and mesmerized that for a time he forgot all about himself.¹ (4)

[Note—¹When Guha Nishad came to meet Bharat, he was a bit skeptical and apprehensive. He hadn’t expected the sort of warmth, the affection and the informal way Bharat would meet him as if he was meeting Laxman*, or some old acquaintance of his. {*Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 193.}

Hence, Nishad was awed by Bharat's courteousness and good manners so much so that for some moments he stood amazed and stunned, not knowing how to respond.]

सकुच सनेहु मोदु मन बाढ़ा । भरतहि चितवत एकटक ठाढ़ा ॥ ५ ॥
धरि धीरजु पद बंदि बहोरी । बिनय सप्रेम करत कर जोरी ॥ ६ ॥

sakuca sanēhu mōdu mana bārḥā. bharatahi citavata ēkaṭaka ṭhārḥā. 5.
dhari dhīraju pada bandi bahōrī. binaya saprēma karata kara jōrī. 6.

He (Nishad) was so amazed and awed by the good nature of Bharat and the sort of warmth with which he was received by the latter that for some moments Nishad stood dumbfounded, staring unblinkingly at Bharat as he was stunned into immobility. (5)

However, he soon collected his wits together, and after paying his obeisance at the feet of Bharat he prayed to the latter with the joined palms of his hands. (6)

कुसल मूल पद पंकज पेखी । मैं तिहुँ काल कुसल निज लेखी ॥ ७ ॥
अब प्रभु परम अनुग्रह तोरें । सहित कोटि कुल मंगल मोरें ॥ ८ ॥

kusala mūla pada paṅkaja pēkhī. maiṁ tihum̐ kāla kusala nija lēkhī. 7.
aba prabhu parama anugraha tōrēm̐. sahita kōṭi kula maṅgala mōrēm̐. 8.

Guha Nishad said to Bharat: 'After seeing thy lotus-like feet which is the root of all welfares and happiness, I find that everything is fine and perfect for me in the three phases of time, viz. the past, the present and the future. (7)

Oh Lord (prabhu)! By thine grace and blessings, I, along with my family (sahita---kula), have attained glories and auspiciousness for countless generations (kōṭi---maṅgala mōrēm̐)¹. (8)

[Note—¹Said Nishad exuberantly: "Oh Lord, it is my good fortune and a rarest of rare honour that thou havest shown so much affection to me and even embraced me who is so lowly. Say indeed, how luck am I! History would remember me as a friend of Lord Ram, as a friend of his entire family. I am a humble boatman and belong to a low caste. Never ever could I have imagined that one day I wouldst be embraced by Lord Ram and his dear brother Bharat who are noble princes belonging to a great kingdom, whilst I am not even a particle of dust before their exalted stature. Glory and praises be to thee for showing so much affection for a humble person like me. I am overwhelmed with gratitude and thankfulness to thee."]

दो०. समुझि मोरि करतूति कुलु प्रभु महिमा जियँ जोड़ ।
जो न भजइ रघुबीर पद जग बिधि बंचित सोड़ ॥ १९५ ॥
dōhā.

samujhi mōri karatūti kulu prabhu mahimā jiyam̐ jō'i.
jō na bhaja'i raghubīra pada jaga bidhi bañcita sō'i. 195.

[Guha Nishad continued:] ‘Verily indeed, in all sooth and without gainsay, when, on the one hand, one considers (weighs) in one’s heart my humble and lowly way of life and the deeds that I do as well as my social standing in this world and my descent (because I am born as a mere lowly boatman who ekes out a living by fishing and ferrying passengers across the river, and doing no other worthy thing), and on the other hand, remembers the greatness and glories of thy majesties (here, referring both to Bharat as well as to Lord Ram; “prabhu mahimā”)—then still if that person does not have devotion for the holy feet of Lord Ram (the Lord of the Raghus; “na bhaja'i raghubīra pada”) it is surely his greatest misfortune, for surely such a person has been cheated by the Creator who has deceived him by deluding his intellect and wisdom so much that he can’t see the obvious.¹ (Doha no. 195)

[Note—¹Put simply, Nishad tells Bharat that the people of the world must see and learn from his own example what greatness they will get, and how good it is to have devotion for Lord Ram and serve him selflessly. He (Nishad) is no great sage, nor is he born in a high caste, and neither is he engaged in some noble vocation or is learned. But still, inspite of his humble upbringing and lowly life and lack of spiritual resources, he has been made so famous and exalted by the courtesy of Lord Ram that even great sages and great devotees of the Lord would envy him. Hence, is it not foolish for a person not to have devotion for Lord Ram as it would grant him the rarest of rare honours in this world and make him famous and respected in the world?

Say, being a friend of Lord Ram, the king of a mighty kingdom, what wants could make Nishad suffer, for the Lord would make it sure that his fast friend is in want of nothing. Surely then, if a person submits himself to Lord Ram, who is actually the Supreme Lord of the world and its Emperor, what shortages and wants can bother him, for the Lord would take good care of his welfare and well-being.

But unfortunately, there are people who don’t or won’t understand this, even the example of Guha Nishad won’t enlighten them about the beneficial rewards of having devotion for Lord Ram, then say what can one say about such people except to lament that they have been deceived by the Creator who has clouded their wisdom so much that they can’t even perceive the obvious.]

चौ०. कपटी कायर कुमति कुजाती । लोक बेद बाहेर सब भाँती ॥ १ ॥

राम कीन्ह आपन जबही तें । भयउँ भुवन भूषन तबही तें ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kapaṭī kāyara kumati kujāṭī. lōka bēda bāhēra saba bhāmṭī. 1.

rāma kīnha āpana jabahī tēm. bhaya'um̐ bhuvana bhūṣana tabahī tēm. 2.

[First outlining his shortcomings and then stressing how honourable he has been rendered due to his nearness with Lord Ram, Nishad says—] ‘I am deceitful, cowardly, evil-minded and born as a member of a lowly community, and I am shunned by the civil society and regarded as outcaste by the Vedas. (1)

But ever since Lord Ram has accepted me (as his friend and follower), I have become like an ornament for the world (for everyone praises me and are envious of my exalted stature). [Say, what greater good fortune could ever have come to me?]' (2)

देखि प्रीति सुनि बिनय सुहाई । मिलेउ बहोरि भरत लघु भाई ॥ ३ ॥
कहि निषाद निज नाम सुबानीं । सादर सकल जोहारीं रानीं ॥ ४ ॥

dēkhi prīti suni binaya suhā'ī. milē'u bahōri bharata laghu bhā'ī. 3.
kahi niṣāda nija nāma subānīm. sādara sakala jōhārīm rānīm. 4.

Seeing Guha Nishad's affection, humility and simplicity of heart, and hearing his prayers, the younger brother of Bharat (i.e. Shatrughan) stepped forward to meet (i.e. embrace) him¹. (3)

Nishad introduced himself by telling Shatrughan his own name. Then he paid his respects to the queens (who had come with Bharat; i.e. mothers Kaushalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi²) too. (4)

[Note—¹Shatrughan had stood at a distance watching the meeting between Bharat and Nishad, for he wanted to wait and watch how the things unfolded. In the beginning Shatrughan was not quite sure about Nishad's intentions, his thoughts and his nature, whether he was their friend or foe, whether he has come to oppose their progress to the forest to meet Lord Ram or if he would cooperate with them. But once he found out that Nishad was a very kind and friendly person who had great affection and devotion for Lord Ram which matched their own, Shatrughan came forward to embrace him like Bharat had done a moment ago. So, there was a great bonhomie between them all.

²Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 187 and its accompanying note.]

जानि लखन सम देहिं असीसा । जिअहु सुखी सय लाख बरीसा ॥ ५ ॥
निरखि निषादु नगर नर नारी । भए सुखी जनु लखनु निहारी ॥ ६ ॥

jāni lakhana sama dēhim asīsā. ji'ahu sukhī saya lākha barīsā. 5.
nirakhi niṣādu nagara nara nārī. bha'ē sukhī janu lakhanu nihārī. 6.

They (i.e. the mothers) regarded him (i.e. Nishad) as being same as Laxman and blessed him, saying, 'You will live a happy life for hundreds and thousands of years.' (5)

When the citizens of Ayodhya, both the males and the females, saw Nishad they too felt very happy as if they were seeing Laxman himself. (6)

[Note—¹Guha Nishad has been likened to Laxman by everyone—viz. Bharat*, Shatrughan, the mothers and the citizens. Surely he was right when he said he was very lucky. {*Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 193.}]

कहहिं लहेउ एहिं जीवन लाहू । भेंटैउ रामभद्र भरि बाहू ॥ ७ ॥
सुनि निषादु निज भाग बड़ाई । प्रमुदित मन लइ चलेउ लेवाई ॥ ८ ॥

kahahim lahē'u ēhim jīvana lāhū. bhēṇṭē'u rāmabhadra bhari bāhū. 7.
suni niṣādu nija bhāga barā'ī. pramudita mana la'i calē'u lēvā'ī. 8.

Everyone was in great praise for Guha Nishad, saying that he has been fully rewarded in his life because the honourable Lord Ram, who was very dear to them all, had met him very affectionately by embracing him with his stretched arms. (7)

When Nishad heard himself being so lavishly praised, he was exhilarated and felt jubilant. Then he cheerfully escorted them (Bharat and his party) forward (to the place where his kinsmen were waiting for his return). (8)

दो०. सनकारे सेवक सकल चले स्वामि रुख पाइ ।
घर तरु तर सर बाग बन बास बनाएन्हि जाइ ॥ १९६ ॥

dōhā.

sanakārē sēvaka sakala calē svāmi rukha pā'i.
ghara taru tara sara bāga bana bāsa banā'ēnhi jā'i. 196.

All the servants and attendants (of Bharat's entourage) moved forward when they got the signal.

Meanwhile, those who had come with Guha Nishad to meet Bharat (i.e. the couriers and attendants who had brought the gifts meant for him) too went quickly as soon as they got the hint from their chief (Nishad) to make proper arrangements for Bharat's entourage to stay, by preparing their homes, clearing the ground under trees, near the ponds, gardens and forests as well as the surrounding fields. (Doha no. 196)

चौ०. सृंगबेरपुर भरत दीख जब । भे सनेहँ सब अंग सिथिल तब ॥ १ ॥
सोहत दिँ निषादहि लागू । जनु तनु धरें बिनय अनुरागू ॥ २ ॥

caupā'ī.

srīgabērapura bharata dīkha jaba. bhē sanēham' saba āṅga sithila taba. 1.
sōhata di'ēm' niṣādahi lāgū. janu tanu dharēm binaya anurāgū. 2.

When Bharat saw the township of Sringberpur, he was thrilled and overcome with emotions so much so that the organs of his body became numb¹. (1)

[Since he could not walk with a steady gait as his legs seemed too weak to support him and his knees shook, so therefore—] Bharat placed his hands on the shoulders of Guha Nishad for support as he walked slowly with a limp. This was a fascinating sight as if the virtues of humility, affection and passion have taken a physical form (because Bharat was greatly moved by emotions of love, affection, remorse and regret as he remembered Lord Ram and his sufferings while entering this place, and Nishad lending his shoulders to support Bharat completed the picture when one devotee supports another if one of them is suddenly overcome with emotions by remembering his Lord God). (2)

[Note—¹Why was Bharat so thrilled and overcome with emotions at the sight of Sringeripur? It is because he recalled he was told by Sumantra that this was the place where Lord Ram had taken some rest under a tree, it was the place where he left the chariot to move ahead on foot, it was the place where he asked Sumantra to return home, it was the place where the Lord had matted his hairs into a coil and wound it around on his head. The remembrance of all these events filled Bharat with grief and sorrows.]

एहि बिधि भरत सेनु सबु संगी । दीखि जाइ जग पावनि गंगा ॥ ३ ॥
रामघाट कहँ कीन्ह प्रनामू । भा मनु मगनु मिले जनु रामू ॥ ४ ॥

ēhi bidhi bharata sēnu sabu saṅgā. dīkhi jā'i jaga pāvani gaṅgā. 3.
rāmaghāṭa kaham' kīnha pranāmū. bhā manu maganu milē janu rāmū. 4.

In this way, Bharat and his army (i.e. his entire entourage) went to see the holy river Ganges (on the banks of which Sringeripur was situated). (3)

There, Bharat bowed his head at a place called 'Ram Ghat', i.e. a place on the bank of Ganges from where Lord Ram had crossed it, and hence named after the Lord, and while doing so he was so overwhelmed as if he had actually met Lord Ram. [To wit, the place reminded him of Lord Ram once again, and for a while this memory mesmerized him so much that he was lost in the thoughts of the Lord, forgetting about himself and his surrounding.]¹ (4)

[Note—¹Bharat's love and devotion for Lord Ram was unmatched and exemplary, and whenever he remembered the Lord he would become emotional, stand dazed for a while and become remorseful. Everyone acknowledged Bharat's deep love for the Lord as is evident in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, at several places, viz. (i) Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 184 (citizens, ministers, courtiers, mothers); (ii) Doha no. 205 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it (the deity of Prayag); (iii) Doha no. 207—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 208 (sage Bharadwaj).]

करहिं प्रनाम नगर नर नारी । मुदित ब्रह्ममय बारि निहारी ॥ ५ ॥
करि मज्जनु मागहिं कर जोरी । रामचंद्र पद प्रीति न थोरी ॥ ६ ॥

karahim̐ pranāma nagara nara nārī. mudita brahmamaya bāri nihārī. 5.
kari majjanu māgahim̐ kara jōrī. rāmacandra pada prīti na thōrī. 6.

The males and the females of the city who had come with Bharat bowed their heads before the holy river Ganges and felt exhilarated by watching its waters that were as pure and holy as Brahm (the Supreme Being). (5)

All of them took a bath in the river and joined their palms to ask the holy river for the blessing that their devotion and affection for the holy feet of Lord Ram should be in abundance, and that it should never diminish. (6)

भरत कहेउ सुरसरि तव रेनू । सकल सुखद सेवक सुरधेनू ॥ ७ ॥
जोरि पानि बर मागउँ एहू । सीय राम पद सहज सनेहू ॥ ८ ॥

bharata kahē'u surasari tava rēnū. sakala sukhada sēvaka suradhēnū. 7.
jōri pāni bara māga'um̐ ēhū. sīya rāma pada sahaja sanēhū. 8.

Addressing river Ganges, Bharat said: 'Oh the holy river of the Gods! Thine sand is a bestower of all happiness and joy, and for those who serve thee it is like the cow of the Gods (known as 'Kaamdhenū') as it fulfills all their wishes. (7)

I bring my hands together and join my palms in a prayerful mode to seek thy blessings that I must have pure, natural and deep love and devotion for the august feet of Lord Ram and Sita.¹ (8)

[Note—¹Later on, when Bharat takes a bath at the confluence of three holy rivers (Ganges, Yamuna and Saraswati) at Prayag, he seeks a similar blessing—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 204—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 205.]

दो०. एहि बिधि मज्जनु भरतु करि गुर अनुसासन पाइ ।
मातु नहानीं जानि सब डेरा चले लवाइ ॥ १९७ ॥

dōhā.

ēhi bidhi majjanu bharatu kari gura anusāsana pā'i.
mātu nahānīm̐ jāni saba ḍērā calē lavā'i. 197.

In this way, after Bharat took his bath in river Ganges and saw that his mothers too had finished taking their baths, he sought permission from his guru (sage Vasistha) and ordered that the tents that were put up for their temporary stay be lifted and shifted to another place where they were supposed to abide for the night. (Doha no. 197)

[Note—We must remember that noble ladies never bathed in the open. So, temporary tents were pitched for the purpose so as to enable the queens and other senior women

in the entourage to take their baths in a part of the bank of the river that was cordoned off from the rest of the party.

As we shall read in Chaupai line no. 1 that follows herein below, the people accompanying Bharat in the large entourage took up lodgings at different places according to their own convenience, but it is understood that the queens and other senior ladies had to be accommodated in private tents that were pitched for their exclusive use in the same way as they were put up on the banks of the river for them to take their baths in private. This is what is meant here when it is said that Bharat ordered that the ‘tents be lifted and shifted to another location where they were to spend the night’.]

चौ०. जहँ तहँ लोगन्ह डेरा कीन्हा । भरत सोधु सबही कर लीन्हा ॥ १ ॥

सुर सेवा करि आयसु पाई । राम मातु पहिं गे दोउ भाई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

jaham̐ tahaṁ̐ lōganha ḍērā kīnhā. bharata sōdhu sabahī kara līnhā. 1.

sura sēvā kari āyasu pāī. rāma mātu pahim̐ gē dō'u bhāī. 2.

The people in the large entourage took up their lodgings according to their own convenience, and Bharat made enquires to make sure that all were at ease. (1)

After that, both the brothers (i.e. Bharat and Shatrughan) paid their obeisance to the gods, and taking formal permission from them, they went to meet mother Kaushalya (“rāma mātu”; the mother of Lord Ram). (2)

चरन चाँपि कहि कहि मृदु बानी । जननीं सकल भरत सनमानी ॥ ३ ॥

भाइहि सौँपि मातु सेवकाई । आपु निषादहि लीन्ह बोलाई ॥ ४ ॥

carana cām̐pi kahi kahi mṛdu bānī. jananīm̐ sakala bharata sanamānī. 3.

bhā'ihī saumpi mātu sēvakāī. āpu niṣādahi līnha bōlāī. 4.

Bharat pressed the legs of all his mothers and spoke politely with them (as a gesture of showing respect and affection for them).¹ (3)

He assigned his brother Shatrughan the duty to serve his mothers², and himself he summoned Nishad to come near him. (4)

[Note—¹Bharat and Shatrughan showed equal respect to all their mothers inspite of what Kaikeyi had done and the indignation with which the two brothers had treated her earlier. It is because by-and-by Bharat realized that she has understood her mistake and was so full of repentance and regret that she was virtually being roasted alive with a terrible sense of guilt and remorse, and therefore should be given due consideration.

Besides this, we have already read that Lord Ram has told Sumantra to give his message to Bharat when he comes back to Ayodhya that he must treat all the mothers equally and with full dignity, because the Lord was apprehensive that Bharat

would be full of indignation towards his own mother Kaikeyi, and was likely to treat her with utter disdain and contempt to the extent of completely neglecting her. Hence, the Lord felt it was necessary to give specific instructions in this respect. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 152.

In these above cited verses we find that Lord Ram has also advised Bharat to take proper care of all the citizens, treating them alike and with dignity like a noble king ought to do for his subjects. This is the reason also why we read in verse no. 1 herein above that Bharat had enquired about how the people accompanying him had lodged for the night, and if they were properly provided for.

²But somehow Bharat could not come to terms with Kaikeyi, and this revulsion for his mother comes out in the open on various occasions when he had publicly denounced her. We read in Geetawali Ramayan, Uttar Kand, verse no. 37 that as long as Kaikeyi lived, Bharat did not see her face nor talked with her.

So therefore, he left Shatrughan to serve her and take care of her needs, and himself went out to talk to Guha Nishad as narrated in this verse.]

चले सखा कर सों कर जोरें । सिथिल सरीरु सनेह न थोरें ॥ ५ ॥

पूँछत सखहि सो ठाउँ देखाऊ । नेकु नयन मन जरनि जुड़ाऊ ॥ ६ ॥

calē sakhā kara sōm kara jōrēm. sithila sarīru sanēha na thōrēm. 5.

pūm̐chata sakhahi sō thā'um̐ dēkhā'ū. nēku nayana mana jarani jurā'ū. 6.

Bharat held the hands of his friend (Guha Nishad) as they both moved forward; Bharat's body was thrilled and he was overpowered with excess of affection¹. (5)

Then Bharat asked his friend Nishad to show him the place the sight of which would give him some peace of mind, and provide some solace and comfort to his tormented heart. (6)

[Note—¹Earlier too a similar situation had occurred when Bharat was so overcome with emotions that he had to put his hands on Nishad's shoulders to take support—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 197.

This gesture of putting one's hands on the shoulder of another and holding his hand shows how friendly the two persons are, and Bharat wished to indicate to Nishad by these simple means that he is very thankful to the latter for doing whatever he could to serve Lord Ram whom Bharat loved so much.]

जहँ सिय रामु लखनु निसि सोए । कहत भरे जल लोचन कोए ॥ ७ ॥

भरत बचन सुनि भयउ बिषादू । तुरत तहाँ लइ गयउ निषादू ॥ ८ ॥

jaham̐ siya rāmu lakhanu nisi sō'ē. kahata bharē jala lōcana kō'ē. 7.

bharata bacana suni bhaya'u biṣādū. turata tahām̐ la'i gaya'u niṣādū. 8.

Bharat told Nishad: 'Please show me that place where Lord Ram and Sita spent the night; where they slept for the night.'

Even as Bharat said this, his eyes were filled with tears. (7)

Hearing these words of Bharat that were full of grief and sorrows, Nishad took him immediately to the place sought by him.

[Which place was it? It is answered in the next verse that follows.] (8)

दो०. जहँ सिंसुपा पुनीत तर रघुबर किय बिश्रामु।
अति सनेहँ सादर भरत कीन्हेउ दंड प्रनामु ॥ १९८ ॥

dōhā.

jaham̐ siṁsupā punīta tara raghubara kiya biśrāmu.
ati sanēham̐ sādara bharata kīnhē'u daṇḍa pranāmu. 198.

Nishad took Bharat to the place where under the pleasant sesame tree Lord Ram, the most exalted of the Raghus (raghubara), had taken rest¹.

Seeing it, Bharat prostrated before it very affectionately to pay his obeisance. (Doha no. 198)

[Note—¹Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 89 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede it.

This episode of Bharat being escorted by Nishad to the place where Lord Ram had spent the night in Sringeripur is also narrated in Veda Vyas' "Adhyatma Ramayan", Ayodhya Kand, Canto 8, verse nos. 25-34.]

चौ०. कुस साँथरी निहारि सुहाई । कीन्ह प्रनामु प्रदच्छिन जाई ॥ १ ॥
चरन रेख रज आँखिन्ह लाई । बनइ न कहत प्रीति अधिकाई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kusa sām̐tharī nihāri suhāī. kīnha pranāmu pradacchina jāī. 1.
carana rēkha raja ām̐khinḥa lāī. bana'i na kahata prīti adhikāī. 2.

When Bharat saw the lovely spread of the Kusha grass (over which Lord Ram and Sita had rested during the night of their stay at Sringeripur)¹, he paid his deep reverence to it by circumambulating around it clockwise (pradacchina). (1)

While picking up the dust of Lord Ram's footprints on the ground and touching his eyes with it, Bharat was so overwhelmed with a surge of love and affection for the Lord that its intensity and depth cannot be sufficiently described. (2)

[Note—¹Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 89.

This verse shows that the place was well preserved by Guha Nishad in the memory of Lord Ram.]

कनक बिंदु दुइ चारिक देखे । राखे सीस सीय सम लेखे ॥ ३ ॥
सजल बिलोचन हृदयँ गलानी । कहत सखा सन बचन सुबानी ॥ ४ ॥

kanaka bindu du'i cārika dēkhē. rākhē sīsa sīya sama lēkhē. 3.
sajala bilōcana hr̥dayam̐ galānī. kahata sakhā sana bacana subānī. 4.

When Bharat observed that some small slivers or spangles of gold were lying scattered there¹, he picked them up and touched his head with them in memory of Sita, treating these articles with reverence as memorabilia that represented her own self. (3)

His eyes were filled with tears and his heart filled with regret and remorse even as he spoke to his friend Nishad (as narrated in the next verse). (4)

[Note—¹Indian women of high society wear a long, body-wrapping apparel known as a 'Sari'. The Sari is often richly embroidered with threads of silver and gold, and decorated with small stars, stripes, laces, spangles and slivers of the two metals, either in the original or their artificial replacements, as add-ons to add glamour and dazzle to the cloth. In ancient times, princesses and queens wore it as a routine affair. Some of these small pieces had fallen off Sita's Sari and lay on the ground.

It is to be noted that no one in Sringeripur touched it or stole it for money.]

श्रीहत सीय बिरहँ दुतिहीना । जथा अवध नर नारि बिलीना ॥ ५ ॥
पिता जनक देउँ पटतर केही । करतल भोगु जोगु जग जेही ॥ ६ ॥

śrīhata sīya biraham̐ dutihīnā. jathā avadha nara nāri bilīnā. 5.
pitā janaka dē'um̐ paṭatara kēhī. karatala bhōgu jōgu jaga jēhī. 6.

Bharat said to Nishad: 'These pieces have lost their shine and luster in the grief of them being separated from Sita just like the people of Ayodhya have lost their charm and vigour, and appear to be exhausted of their energy due the agony accompanying the grief of separation (from Lord Ram and Sita). (5)

Her father, king Janak, is so exalted and honourable that both the fruits of Yoga (spiritual rewards obtained by doing meditation) and Bhoga (comforts and pleasures got by material things of the world) are readily available to him as if they were placed right before him on his two palms. Say then, with whom can I compare her (Sita)?

[To wit, Sita is incomparable in majesty and glory, for she has a great father who himself is unmatched in the world.] (6)

ससुर भानुकुल भानु भुआलू । जेहि सिहात अमरावतिपालू ॥ ७ ॥
प्राननाथु रघुनाथ गोसाई । जो बड़ होत सो राम बड़ाई ॥ ८ ॥

sasura bhānukula bhānu bhu'ālū. jēhi sihāta amarāvatipālū. 7.
prānanāthu raghunātha gōsā'īm. jō baṛa hōta sō rāma baṛā'īm. 8.

On the other hand, she has a father-in-law (i.e. king Dasrath) who is like a sun in the Solar race (i.e. who is exalted and glorious like the sun is amongst other heavenly bodies in the sky), and who is even praised by the king of Amravati (i.e. Indra, the king of the gods)¹. (7)

And to add to her greatness, her husband is Lord Ram, the exalted and glorious Lord, who is very dear to her heart.

Those who are wise and learned (gōsā'īm) unanimously affirm that whomsoever Lord Ram gives honour is indeed most glorious and fortunate in this world. [And Lord Ram being Sita's dear husband, it is a rare honour that she possesses. Indeed, Sita is so fortunate and highly respectable that she has king Janak as her father, king Dasrath as her father-in-law, and Lord Ram as her dear husband. Who is as lucky as Sita is to have such exalted persons as one's close family members?] (8)

[Note—¹Earlier we have read that Nishad too has expressed a similar sentiment in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 91.]

दो०. पति देवता सुतीय मनि सीय साँथरी देखि ।
बिहरत हृदउ न हहरि हर पबि तें कठिन बिसेषि ॥ १९९ ॥

dōhā.

pati dēvatā sutīya mani sīya sām̐tharī dēkhi.
biharata hr̥da'u na hahari hara pabi tēm̐ kaṭhina bisēṣi. 199.

Oh Lord Shiva (hara), it's so unfortunate that my heart does not burst in grief when I behold the spread of the Kush grass upon which Sita, who has such a glorious pedigree and upbringing, and is like a jewel amongst virtuous women, had rested. Surely, my heart is very stubborn and hard to break. (Doha no. 199)

चौ०. लालन जोगु लखन लघु लोने । भे न भाइ अस अहहिं न होने ॥ १ ॥
पुरजन प्रिय पितु मातु दुलारे । सिय रघुबीरहि प्रानपिआरे ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

lālana jōgu lakhana laghu lōnē. bhē na bhā'i asa ahahim̐ na hōnē. 1.
purajana priya pitu mātū dulārē. siya raghubīrahi prānapī'ārē. 2.

[Showering praises on Laxman, Bharat says—] 'As to my younger brother Laxman, he is indeed so lovable and dear, and is so extremely nice and courteous, and worthy of the greatest of adoration and affection that there has never been, is not there in the present, and neither would be there in the future a brother like him. (1)

For in all sooth, he is dear to all the citizens of Ayodhya, he is beloved of his mother and father, and he is a darling of Lord Ram and Sita who love him so dearly as if he was an image of their own life. (2)

[Note—Verse no. 2 is an elaboration and an explanation of what has been said by Bharat in verse no. 1, that there is no brother in this world like Laxman is.]

मृदु मूरति सुकुमार सुभाऊ । तात बाउ तन लाग न काऊ ॥ ३ ॥
ते बन सहहिं बिपति सब भाँती । निदरे कोटि कुलिस एहिं छाती ॥ ४ ॥

mṛdu mūrati su Kumāra subhā'ū. tāta bā'u tana lāga na kā'ū. 3.
tē bana saha hiṁ bipati saba bhām'tī. nidarē kōṭi kulisa ēhiṁ chātī. 4.

He has such a delicate constitution, is so polite, amiable and courteous by his inherent nature, and has never experienced the effects of hot wind on one's body as he has never stepped out to face the vagaries of Nature. (3)

That same Laxman (who has never suffered in his life) is now willingly coping with all sorts of sufferings and troubles in the wilderness without a whimper of complain (in order to faithfully serve Lord Ram and Sita)!

Come to think of it, how hard and harsh and merciless and stubborn is my heart that inspite of knowing all this it has not ruptured, it has not splintered, thereby putting to shame even the hardest of rocks in this creation that are used to make Vajra (kulisa), a weapon deemed to be unbreakable! [Woe to me, for my heart seems to be made of a rock because it is emotionless; it seems to be sterner and harsher than the strongest of rocks and stones in this creation.] (4)

[Note—In these two verses, Bharat laments that Laxman has to suffer so much in the forest inspite of the fact that he has never experienced any sort of hardships in life. Here, Bharat means that Laxman is so fortunate as to have sacrificed his comforts and easy way life in order to serve Lord Ram, while he (Bharat) on the other hand has been the cause of inflicting untold misery and troubles not only to Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman but also to everyone else.

Bharat rues that the contrast between them, i.e. Laxman and himself, is so sharp that it proves how sinful and harsh he himself is, for while Laxman became a source of solace and comfort for Lord Ram as he offered his services to the Lord in the forest, he (Bharat), on the other hand, became the source that would put the Lord to the greatest of discomfort and hardships.]

राम जनमि जगु कीन्ह उजागर । रूप सील सुख सब गुन सागर ॥ ५ ॥
पुरजन परिजन गुर पितु माता । राम सुभाउ सबहि सुखदाता ॥ ६ ॥

rāma janami jagu kīnha ujāgara. rūpa sīla sukha saba guna sāgara. 5.
purajana parijana gura pitu mātā. rāma subhā'u sabahi sukhadātā. 6.

[Turning his attention to Lord Ram once more, Bharat says—] ‘Lord Ram has glorified and blessed the world by taking birth in it as a human being (to become a part of this mortal world like any other living being)¹.

The Lord is indeed an embodiment of majesty, beauty, magnificence, goodness, courteousness and good manners, of bliss, joy and happiness—nay, not only these but he is an ocean of all other excellent virtues and qualities imaginable². (5)

Everyone—such as the citizens, all the kith and kin, the servants and attendants, the guru, the father and the mother—all are extremely pleased by the pleasant, courteous and friendly disposition of Lord Ram, for he grants cheer, bliss, joy and happiness to one and all. (6)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 127; (b) Uttar Kand, (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 48.

²There are umpteen numbers of verses that stress the glories and virtues of Lord Ram—for instance, refer to Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 146—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 148; (ii) Doha no. 242—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 244 (the Lord’s beauty and charm); (iii) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 197 (Lord Ram being an embodiment of bliss, joy and happiness for all); (iv) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 241 (Lord Ram is an ocean of excellent qualities and virtues; he has a charming personality); (b) Ayodhya Kand, (v) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 139 (Lord Ram is an ocean of bliss, joy and happiness); (vi) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 243 (Lord Ram is an ocean of good virtues and courteousness).]

बैरिउ राम बड़ाई करहीं । बोलनि मिलनि बिनय मन हरहीं ॥ ७ ॥

सारद कोटि कोटि सत सेवा । करि न सकहिं प्रभु गुन गन लेखा ॥ ८ ॥

bairi'u rāma baṛāī karahīm. bōlani milani binaya mana harahīm. 7.
sārada kōṭi kōṭi sata sēṣā. kari na sakahīm prabhu guna gana lēkhā. 8.

Even those who are supposed to be or are expected to be opposed or inimical to Lord Ram are so much influenced by the Lord’s charm and good virtues that they praise and applaud him¹.

In all sooth and without gainsay, Lord Ram’s manner of speaking, his way of meeting others, his polite and courteous manners, his affable and amiable disposition are such that he enthralls the mind and the heart of all who come in contact with him. (7)

Verily indeed, hundreds and thousands of Goddess Saraswatis (the patron deity of speech and learning) as well as Lord Seshnaths (the celestial serpent with a thousand hoods and equal numbers of tongues) find themselves incompetent to give an account of Lord Ram’s glories and virtues².

[To wit, Lord Ram’s glories and virtues are like an ‘ocean’, and as no one can measure the ocean and delineate its boundaries, nor can anyone say how many

buckets or cups or litres of water are there in the ocean, so likewise it is impossible to count or measure the glories and virtues of Lord Ram as they are countless and endless.] (8)

[Note—¹We have some wonderful instances where we find that even those who were expected to be in the opposite camp of his arch enemy, i.e. Ravana, the king of the demons, and opposed to Lord Ram, turn out to be devotees of the Lord so much so that they praise him. For example, we have Vibhishan*1, the brother of Ravana; then we have Lankini*2, the gatekeeper of Lanka whom Hanuman first met while entering the city; then we come across Trijata*3, the female demon appointed by Ravana to guard Sita, and another example is that of Suka*4, the spy sent by Ravana behind Vibhishan to find out details of Lord Ram's camp.

Even Ravana's own wife, Mandodari*5, happened to be favourably inclined towards Lord Ram; then there was the old demon Malyawant*6, Ravana's maternal father, advisor and minister, who too favoured Lord Ram. What more, Kumbhakaran*7, the younger brother of Ravana, was also all praises for Lord Ram.

Another example is that of Tara*8, the wife of Baali who was dethroned and killed by Lord Ram in order to support Sugriv.

Then we have the instance of the demon Marich*9 who had previously fought with Lord Ram when the Lord was protecting sage Vishwamitra's fire sacrifice, but later on he became a great devotee of the Lord.

{*1Vibhishan = Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 6; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 39.

*2Lankini = Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 4—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 5.

*3Trijata = Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 11.

*4Suka = Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-12 that precede Doha no. 57.

*5Mandodari = Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 14—to Doha no. 15.

*6Malyawanta = Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 40; (b) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 48—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 49.

*7Kumbhakaran = Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 63.

*8Tara = Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 27-29 that precede Doha no. 7.

*9Marich = Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 25; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 and Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 26.

²Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 12; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 342; (b) Uttar Kand, (iii) Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 52; (iv) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 91—to Doha no. 92.]

दो०. सुखस्वरूप रघुबंसमनि मंगल मोद निधान ।

ते सोवत कुस डसि महि बिधि गति अति बलवान ॥ २०० ॥

dōhā.

sukhasvarūpa raghubansamani maṅgala mōda nidhāna.
tē sōvata kusa dāsi mahi bidhi gati ati balavāna. 200.

Lord Ram, who is like a jewel in the illustrious family of king Raghu (of Ayodhya), is an embodiment of joy and happiness. The Lord is a treasury of auspiciousness and delight.

That same Lord had to sleep on the ground by spreading grass on it—such is the ridiculous, odd, incredulous and whimsical way the Creator and Providence operate¹. (Doha no. 200)

[Note—¹To wit, the whims of the Creator are absurd and unpredictable, and so are the incongruous provisions of Providence, for they can turn things on their heads as and when it suits them. What to say of poor, ordinary mortals who are at the receiving end of the cruel, inconsiderate and merciless ways of the Creator and Providence over which the poor creatures have no say, for it is such an irony that even Lord Ram, the almighty Lord of the world, himself was not spared from the whims and fancies and recklessness of the Creator and Providence.]

चौ०. राम सुना दुखु कान न काऊ । जीवनतरु जिमि जोगवड़ राऊ ॥ १ ॥

पलक नयन फनि मनि जेहि भाँती । जोगवहिं जननि सकल दिन राती ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

rāma sunā dukhu kāna na kā'ū. jīvanataru jimi jōgava'i rā'ū. 1.

palaka nayana phani mani jēhi bhāmṭī. jōgavahim janani sakala dina rātī. 2.

Bharat lamented: 'Lord Ram had never ever heard of any mention of 'suffering and sorrow', he did not know what these things were, because the king (my father Dasrath) had lovingly brought him up and tended him so kindly and affectionately as if the Lord was an embodiment of his very own life¹. (1)

Even the mothers had tended Lord Ram² very lovingly and taken exceptional care of his comfort and happiness, every day and night, just like the eyelids protect the eye every moment of a person's life³. (2)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 40.

Dasrath himself has said that he cannot survive without Lord Ram—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 33.

Dasrath's love for Lord Ram is clearly narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 155 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it.

²King Dasrath had three chief queens, viz. Kaushalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi. Kaushalya was the mother of Lord Ram, Sumitra of Laxman and Shatrughan, and Kaikeyi of Bharat. All of them loved Lord Ram very dearly as is clearly stated in this verse. Even Kaikeyi, who unfortunately turned hostile towards Lord Ram as it was she who had been instrumental in the Lord's banishment to the forest, had loved him

very dearly too, so much so that her suddenly turning against the Lord had stunned everyone, and all were of the opinion that it was less of her own fault and more of a malignant Creator's whimsical and erratic nature that had precipitated things. This view is expressly stated in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 47; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 48.

³The eyelids are so vigilant in their care of the eye that if they apprehend even the slightest chance of any kind of harm coming to the eye that may cause injury or discomfort to it, then the eyelids would immediately close to shut the eye and protect it. Similarly, the mothers were always on their toes to ensure that no harm or discomfort comes to Lord Ram on any account.

In this context, refer also to the following verses where the same idea employing the metaphor of the eyelids protecting the eye has been used: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 57; (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 59; (iii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 142.]

ते अब फिरत बिपिन पदचारी । कंद मूल फल फूल अहारी ॥ ३ ॥
धिग कैकई अमंगल मूला । भइसि प्रान प्रियतम प्रतिकूला ॥ ४ ॥

tē aba phirata bipina padacārī. kanda mūla phala phūla ahārī. 3.
dhiga kaikaī amaṅgala mūlā. bha'isi prāna priyatama pratikūlā. 4.

That same Lord Ram (who had a privileged upbringing, who had been tenderly brought up by his loving parents, and who had never ever experienced sufferings, miseries or grief in his life) is now roaming around in the forest on foot, subsisting by eating plants and their edible products such as bulbs, roots, stems, fruits and flowers. (3)

Shameful and accursed is Kaikeyi who has turned out to be an embodiment of evilness and wickedness because she turned hostile not only towards her own husband (king Dasrath, leading to his death) but also towards a Lord (i.e. Lord Ram) who is so dear to everyone, and has an affable and amiable nature (by sending him to the forest to suffer).’ (4)

मैं धिग धिग अघ उदधि अभागी । सबु उतपातु भयउ जेहि लागी ॥ ५ ॥
कुल कलंकु करि सृजेउ बिधाताँ । साइँदोह मोहि कीन्ह कुमाताँ ॥ ६ ॥

mairn dhiga dhiga agha udadhi abhāgī. sabu utapātu bhaya'u jēhi lāgī. 5.
kula kalaṅku kari srjē'u bidhātām̃. sā'im̃dōha mōhi kīnha kumātām̃. 6.

[Expressing a profound sense of regret and remorse, Bharat continues to lament—]
‘Woe to me, shame to my unfortunate self who is twice accursed and an ocean of contempt that all this mischief and ignominious deeds were done in my name. (5)

The Creator has (been so cruel and unjust to me that he has) made me take birth as a dark spot and a blot on the otherwise illustrious family in which I am born, and to aggravate my sufferings he had made take birth from the womb of a wicked mother that would make me hostile, inimical and antagonized towards my own Lord (i.e. made me turn me against Lord Ram)¹.’ (6)

[Note—¹What Bharat is saying here is out of his overwhelming grief and a sense of guilt, for the actual fact is that he was never against Lord Ram. On the contrary, Bharat was shocked when he first learnt that his name was dragged by his mother into this controversy without his being at all aware of what wicked things she was planning. But nevertheless, he could not avoid the blame and the ignominy that stuck to his name, causing him extreme emotional discomfort and mental regret. Bharat was so shocked at the turn of events that he does now know how he would ever be able to absolve himself of any wrongdoing, and clean his name from the blot that has been cast upon him. This is why his lamentations and expression of regret and sorrowfulness does not seem to come to an end.]

सुनि सप्रेम समुझाव निषादू । नाथ करिअ कत बादि बिषादू ॥ ७ ॥

राम तुम्हहि प्रिय तुम्ह प्रिय रामहि । यह निरजोसु दोसु बिधि बामहि ॥ ८ ॥

sunī saprēma samujhāva niṣādū. nātha kari'a kata bādi biṣādū. 7.

rāma tumhahi priya tumha priya rāmahi. yaha nirajōsu dōsu bidhi bāmahi. 8.

When Nishad heard these words of Bharat that expressed his excess of grief and remorse, he comforted the latter affectionately (like a true friend), saying: ‘Oh Lord (nātha)! Why doth thou regret so much? (7)

Lord Ram is indeed so dear to thee, and likewise thou art also very dear to the Lord, and there is certainly no doubt about the purity of the mutual love and affection that exists between the two of you¹. The fault is of the Creator who has been hostile and opposed to all, and of no one else, that the seed of misfortunes and doubts have been sowed². (8)

[Note—¹This fact is endorsed by others too—e.g. mother Kaushalya, the deity of Prayag, as well as sage Bharadwaj have also reiterated the same idea (apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 169 (Kaushalya); (ii) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 205 (deity of Prayag); and (iii) Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 208 (sage Bharadwaj).

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 49 (citizens of Ayodhya); (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 58 (Sita); (iii) Doha no. 206 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it (sage Bharadwaj).]

छं०. बिधि बाम की करनी कठिन जेहिं मातु कीन्ही बावरी । १ ।

तेहि राति पुनि पुनि करहिं प्रभु सादर सरहना रावरी ॥ २ ॥

तुलसी न तुम्ह सो राम प्रीतमु कहतु हौं सौंहें किएँ । ३ ।
परिनाम मंगल जानि अपने आनिए धीरजु हिएँ ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

bidhi bāma kī karanī kaṭhina jēhim mātu kīnhī bāvarī. 1.
tēhi rāti puni puni karahim prabhu sādara sarahanā rāvarī. 2.
tulasī na tumha sō rāma prītamū kahatu haum saunhēm ki'ēm. 3.
parināma maṅgala jāni apanē āni'ē dhīraju hi'ēm. 4.

Guha Nishad continued to assuage Bharat's hurt feelings by saying: 'The unfortunate developments have been perpetrated by the Creator who had turned hostile and inimical¹, for it was he who had deluded the mind of thy mother (Kaikeyi) so much that she lost the ability to think rationally, wisely and coherently, which in effect made her act like mad. (Chanda line no. 1)

That night (i.e. the night Lord Ram had spent resting under the tree at Srīgberpur before moving ahead)² Lord Ram had repeatedly praised thy Lordship (rāvarī) in very affectionate terms (sādara sarahanā).' (Chanda line no. 2)

Tulsidas (the saint-poet who is narrating this story) says that Nishad further told Bharat that: 'I say on oath that truly there is no one else whom Lord Ram loveth more than he loveths thee. [To wit, I can vouchsafe on oath that Lord Ram loveths thee most dearly, and more than he loveths anyone else.] (Chanda line no. 3)

Therefore, havest courage and be rest assured that everything wouldst be well and end in a good note, so do not despair and lament so sorely; do not feel so doleful, for in all sooth it is in vain for thee to feel so sorrowful!' (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹Please refer to a detailed observation in this respect that has been appended to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 202 herein below.

²While reading the text of Ram Charit Manas we have not come across any previous mention of Lord Ram praising Bharat during his meeting with Guha Nishad at Srīgberpur. So perhaps Nishad had said this thing about Lord Ram praising Bharat during their previous meeting here at Srīgberpur just to comfort Bharat and tell him not to get unduly upset that the Lord might have felt very hurt that it was due to Bharat he had to suffer so much, for Lord Ram loved him (Bharat) dearly, and there was no doubt about it.]

दो०. अंतरजामी रामु सकुच सप्रेम कृपायतन ।
चलिअ करिअ बिश्रामु यह बिचारि दृढ़ आनि मन ॥ २०१ ॥
dōhā.

antarajāmī rāmu sakuca saprēma kṛpāyatana.
cali'a kari'a biśrāmu yaha bicāri dṛṛha āni mana. 201.

Lord Ram knows the innermost feelings of everyone (*antarajāmī*)¹, and so he is surely aware of thy deep love and affection for him. Besides, the Lord is very courteous, full of love and an embodiment of grace, kindness and mercy².

Therefore, take courage and comfort thyself by firmly holding this fact in thine heart (about Lord Ram loving thee dearly), and stop regretting and lamenting unnecessarily, and without cause. Please come along and take some rest.' (Doha no. 201)

[Note—¹This virtue of Lord Ram, that he is aware of the innermost feelings and thoughts of all living being as he lives inside their hearts as their Atma, is reiterated as numerous places in Ram Charit Manas. Some of the instances are as follows:

Ram Charit Manas, (a) Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 66 (Laxman); (ii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 72; (iii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 211; (iv) Doha no. 256; (v) Doha no. 257; (vi) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 266; (vii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 267; (ix) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 298; (b) Aranya Kand, (ix) Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 6 (sage Atri); (x) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 9 (all the sages when Lord Ram asked them about the heap of bones he saw along the road to the forest); (xi) Chaupai line no. 19 that precedes Doha no. 11 (sage Sutikshan); (xii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 39 (Lord Shiva to Uma, his consort); (xiii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 42; (c) Sundar Kand, (xiv) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 49 (Vibhishan); (d) Uttar Kand, (xv) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 36 (Lord Ram knows the inner thoughts of all living being).

²Even if the developments might have unsettled Lord Ram for some moments, as is quite possible to happen when he may have observed how Sita and Laxman were also made to suffer in thy name, but surely the Lord must have overcome such transitory negative emotions and not let them affect his deep-rooted love for thee. I have had the good fortune to stay with the Lord for quite some time, and I am privy to his feelings and nature. He is so kind and compassionate by his inherent nature that there is not an inkling of doubt that he has already forgiven thee, even before thou wouldst ask him for forgiveness.]

चौ०. सखा बचन सुनि उर धरि धीरा । बास चले सुमिरत रघुबीरा ॥ १ ॥

यह सुधि पाइ नगर नर नारी । चले बिलोकन आरत भारी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sakhā bacana suni ura dhari dhīrā. bāsa calē sumirata raghubīrā. 1.

yaha sudhi pā'i nagara nara nārī. calē bilōkana ārata bhārī. 2.

Hearing the comforting words of his friend (Nishad) and gathering courage in his heart, Bharat proceeded to go towards his camp, all the while keeping Lord Ram in his thoughts. (1)

When the citizens, both the males and the females, heard the news (about Bharat going and paying his respects at the place where Lord Ram had spent the night under

the sesame tree earlier), all of them eagerly went there to see for themselves that revered spot. (2)

परदखिना करि करहिं प्रनामा । देहिं कैकड़िहि खोरि निकामा ॥ ३ ॥
भरि भरि बारि बिलोचन लेहीं । बाम बिधातहि दूषन देहीं ॥ ४ ॥

paradakhinā kari karahim pranāmā. dēhim kaika'ihī khōri nikāmā. 3.
bhari bhari bāri bilōcana lēhīm. bāma bidhātahi dūṣana dēhīm. 4.

The people went around the tree and the spot where Lord Ram had taken rest earlier and bowed before it to pay their obeisance, while blaming Kaikeyi for all the mischief. (3)

Their eyes became filled with tears even as they profusely blamed the Creator for perpetrating the misfortune¹. (4)

[Note—¹Earlier too the citizens had blamed the Creator for all the misfortunes that had befallen on them—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 49.

Why was the Creator so hostile towards Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman? Well, the answer is that he had become jealous of them. Why was the Creator 'jealous' of them? Well the answer is found in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-6 that precede Doha no. 120. Now, let us see how.

As we all know by now, Lord Ram was not an ordinary human being, for he was 'self-born', being the Supreme Being himself manifested in the form of a human being, and not someone created in the normal course of creation by the Creator known as Brahma.

This fact was well known to Brahma, because he had accompanied the gods, sages and mother earth in the past when they had prayed to the Lord to save them from the tyranny of Ravana and his race of demons (apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 184 along with Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede it).

Brahma felt that this 'self-born' status of Lord Ram trespassed on his jurisdiction, because everything and everyone in this mortal world is created by Brahma alone, and Lord Ram being 'self-born' simply meant that the Lord was an exception, one who was 'not' Brahma's product of creation like all other creatures are.

This made Brahma fidgety and irritated, and in order to prove that he was competent enough to create a person in the likeness of Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman, complete in all respects, with equal glory, majesty, qualities and charm, he started a project to make another copy of the three about whom he could boast that they were products of his own creative skills and craftsmanship. But unfortunately, he failed in his endeavour. This stoked 'jealousy and outrage' in the Creator's heart, and to settle scores and vent his ire on Lord Ram for having proved him incompetent to create someone in the likeness of the Lord, Sita and Laxman, the malicious Creator then decided to punish them by making them suffer and be traumatized by maneuvering things in a such a wicked way so that Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman would have to go to the forest. And to give effect to his evil plans, Brahma roped in Saraswati, the goddess of wisdom, and used her to fiddle with the wisdom of Kaikeyi so that she

turned against Lord Ram all of a sudden (apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 11 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it).]

एक सराहिं भरत सनेहू । कोउ कह नृपति निबाहेउ नेहू ॥ ५ ॥
निंदहिं आपु सराहि निषादहि । को कहि सकइ बिमोह बिषादहि ॥ ६ ॥

ēka sarāhahim bharata sanēhū. kō'u kaha nrpati nibāhē'u nēhū. 5.
nindahim āpu sarāhi niṣādahi. kō kahi saka'i bimōha biṣādahi. 6.

Meanwhile, some amongst them lauded Bharat's exemplary love for Lord Ram, while others praised king Dasrath as he had kept his promise of having undiluted love for the Lord because he preferred death to living without the Lord. (5)

There were some amongst the citizens who cursed themselves when comparing their love for Lord Ram with the king's love for the Lord (because while the king kept his promise and maintained his reputation of having true love for Lord Ram by dying to prove it, the citizens lived and went on with their chores of routine life inspite of proclaiming that they too loved Lord Ram dearly), while there were others who praised Nishad lavishly when compared to their own selves (because Nishad was shown so much affection by Lord Ram who called him a 'friend'*1, and also because he had accompanied the Lord to a great distance in the forest, whereas the Lord had abandoned them on the first day out of Ayodhya*2). (6)

[Note--*1Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 88 (Lord Ram calling Guha Nishad a 'friend').

*2Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 85—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 86 (Lord Ram leaves the citizens behind on the banks of river Tamsa as he quickly moved on to the forest).

Later on, the Lord however allowed Nishad to accompany him on his onwards journey to the forest—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 104.]

एहि बिधि राति लोगु सबु जागा । भा भिनुसार गुदारा लागा ॥ ७ ॥
गुरहि सुनावँ चढ़ाइ सुहाई । नई नाव सब मातु चढ़ाई ॥ ८ ॥
दंड चारि महँ भा सबु पारा । उतरि भरत तब सबहि सँभारा ॥ ९ ॥

ēhi bidhi rāti lōgu sabu jāgā. bhā bhinusāra gudārā lāgā. 7.
gurahi sunāvam̐ caṛhā'i suhā'īm. na'īm nāva saba mātu caṛhā'īm. 8.
daṇḍa cāri maham̐ bhā sabu pārā. utari bharata taba sabahi sam̐bhārā. 9.

In this way, all the people kept awake the whole night¹.

Early the next morning, arrangements were made, and the passage of the entire entourage across the river began. (6)

[Bharat and his friend Nishad took charge over the arrangements for this crossing.] First, the guru (sage Vasistha) was made to board a good boat that was comfortable for the crossing, and then all the mothers were put on board a boat that was newly constructed. (7)

Within a time span of ‘four dandas’ (“*daṇḍa cāri*”; i.e. roughly an hour and a half), the whole party was across and landed on the other side of the river.

After disembarking, Bharat took stock of the situation to see everything was in order (i.e. to oversee that people and supplies have made a safe crossing). (8)

[Note—¹As we have read in the forgoing verses, the whole night was spent by the citizens coming and going from their camps to pay their homage at the spot under the sesame tree where Lord Ram had spent a night on his outward journey to the forest. The people had become so emotional and excited that the whole night was spent in remembering the developments of the past, talking about Lord Ram, about the devotion of Bharat and Nishad, and other related matters so much so that no one had the inclination to sleep.]

दो०. प्रातःक्रिया करि मातु पद बंदि गुरहि सिरु नाइ ।
आगें किए निषाद गन दीन्हैउ कटकु चलाइ ॥ २०२ ॥

dōhā.

prātakriyā kari mātu pada bandi gurahi siru nā'i.
āgēm ki'ē niṣāda gana dīnhē'u kaṭaku calā'i. 202.

After landing on the other side of the river, Bharat first finished his daily morning chores (such as washing, bathing, praying etc.), and then he offered his respects to the mothers and obeisance at the feet of his guru (sage Vasistha).

After that, keeping Nishad in the vanguard of the procession (to lead it from the front and show them the route to be taken)¹, the party was made to move on. (Doha no. 202)

[Note—¹Guha Nishad was a local chieftain who knew the geography and topography of the land thoroughly, and previously he had accompanied Lord Ram on his journey after he had crossed the river Ganges where Sringeripur was located, had went with the Lord to sage Bharadwaj's hermitage, and accompanied the Lord till the point when he had reached the further side of river Yamuna from where the Lord sent him back home. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 109; (ii) Doha no. 111.}

So therefore, Nishad was the best person to act as a guide for Bharat's party, to help them retrace the route taken by Lord Ram, and to point out special landmarks related to the Lord's journey. This is clearly hinted in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 216; (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 221; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-2, and 8 that precede Doha no. 224; (iv) Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 225.

Further, Nishad was well known and respected in that part of the realm, and his leading the huge entourage would help dispel any doubt that may arise in the mind of people along the long and winding route about the reason of such a huge

procession, escorted by a detachment of well-armed troops, heading to the forest—was it going on a military expedition, was it marching to invade any kingdom, was it taking some prisoner to exile, or was it going to encircle and imprison Lord Ram in the forest? Nishad would tell the people that they were friendly troops going to bring Lord Ram back home, and not an expeditionary army on a mission to wage wars on anybody, or a procession taking someone banished from his homeland to a faraway land for putting him into a distant exile.]

चौ०. कियउ निषादनाथु अगुआई । मातु पालकीं सकल चलाई ॥ १ ॥
साथ बोलाइ भाइ लघु दीन्हा । बिप्रन्ह सहित गवनु गुर कीन्हा ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

kiya'u niṣādanāthu agu'ā'īm. mātu pālakīm sakala calā'īm. 1.
sātha bōlā'i bhā'i laghu dīnhā. bipranha sahita gavanu gura kīnhā. 2.

Placing Nishad at the head of the procession, Bharat next ordered that the palanquins bearing the mothers should follow next. (1)

Bharat asked his younger brother (Shatrughan) to escort the mothers. Meanwhile, the guru (sage Vasistha) too proceeded ahead, with Brahmins and other seniors by his side to accompany him. (2)

आपु सुरसरिहि कीन्ह प्रनामू । सुमिरे लखन सहित सिय रामू ॥ ३ ॥
गवने भरत पयादेहिं पाए । कोतल संग जाहिं डोरिआए ॥ ४ ॥

āpu surasarihi kīnha pranāmū. sumirē lakhana sahita siya rāmū. 3.
gavanē bharata payādēhim pā'ē. kōtala saṅga jāhim ḍōri'ā'ē. 4.

After having dispatched others, Bharat stayed back for a while to bow before river Ganges, the holy river of the gods (surasari), to pay his obeisance to the holy river even as he remembered Laxman, Sita and Lord Ram¹. (3)

From now onwards, Bharat walked on foot even as his attendants followed him alongside, holding the bridles of the horses in their hands². (4)

[Note—¹To wit, Bharat paid his respects to the holy river in the memory of his beloved ones, viz. Laxman, Sita and Lord Ram. He sought blessings of river Ganges and prayed to its presiding deity so that Laxman, Lord Ram and Sita can be happy and safe in the forest.

By remembering Laxman first, Bharat expressed his special gratitude to his brother for serving Lord Ram selflessly and diligently, an honour he himself was denied. Bharat was all praise for Laxman as he had sacrificed his own comforts and happiness just in order to serve Lord Ram and Sita. Bharat developed a special affection and respect for Laxman in his heart as is clearly mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 200.

The Lord's devotee comes first, and the devotee occupies a place above, or higher than the Lord himself—this verse points out in this direction, for Bharat remembers Laxman first, and Sita and Lord Ram afterwards. This fact, that the Lord regards his devotee with great affection, and treats him as being superior to his own self, has been reiterated in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 16; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 16 that precedes Doha no. 120.

²Bharat's humility and simplicity, his devotion for Lord Ram, his sense of guilt and remorse with a sincere desire for repentance, is indeed remarkable. Earlier in the story we have read that Lord Ram had come to the bank of river Ganges on the chariot driven by the chief minister, Sumantra. The Lord had sent Sumantra back from this side of the river, crossed it, and proceeded on foot after landing on the opposite side. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 100; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 102; and (iii) Doha no. 104.}

So, Bharat decided that he too would walk on foot from this point. We will recall that at the time of departure from Ayodhya, Bharat had boarded a chariot on the instructions of his mother (apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 188), but the journey was long, and somewhere along the way he had switched to mount a horse. This is why it is said here that the attendants walked alongside Bharat while holding the bridle of the horses in their hands.

Remember: Bharat was a prince of a mighty kingdom, and as such more than one horse was always kept at his disposal in case some emergency arose. This is why the plural 'horses' has been used here.]

कहहिं सुसेवक बारहिं बारा । होइअ नाथ अस्व असवारा ॥ ५ ॥
 रामु पयादेहि पायँ सिधाए । हम कहँ रथ गज बाजि बनाए ॥ ६ ॥
 सिर भर जाउँ उचित अस मोरा । सब तें सेवक धरमु कठोरा ॥ ७ ॥
 देखि भरत गति सुनि मृदु बानी । सब सेवक गन गरहिं गलानी ॥ ८ ॥

kahahim̐ susēvaka bārahim̐ bārā. hō'i'a nātha asva asavārā. 5.
 rāmu payādēhi pāyam̐ sidhā'ē. hama kaham̐ ratha gaja bāji banā'ē. 6.
 sira bhara jā'um̐ ucita asa mōrā. saba tēm̐ sēvaka dharamu kaṭhōrā. 7.
 dēkhi bharata gati suni mṛdu bānī. saba sēvaka gana garahim̐ galānī. 8.

His faithful servants repeatedly requested him to mount one of the horses, pleading: 'Sir, please mount a horse. [Walking on foot would tire you. When others see you walking, they too would follow suit and discard their vehicles, and start walking. It will slow down our progress, and we have a long way to go. Hence, it would be prudent if you please get on a horse to make our progress swifter, and also to prevent others from enduring hardships by walking on a rough path on such a long journey.]' (5)

Bharat replied politely: 'Lord Ram had gone on foot, say then how would it suit me to travel by riding a chariot, or by mounting an elephant or a horse? Were these modes of transport meant only for me, and not for the Lord? (6)

Actually I should not even set foot on the ground where Lord Ram had set his own foot (because the ground has become sanctified), but I ought to rather use my head to roll forward every inch of the way—for the duties of a servant are very difficult and hard to follow.¹ (7)

When the servants and attendants accompanying Bharat heard his polite words and saw his good manners and behaviour, all of them felt ashamed of themselves and regretted that they lacked the sort of exemplary virtues and qualities that a loyal and faithful servant of a lord ought to possess, as exemplified by Bharat himself.² (8)

[Note—¹The answer of Bharat showcases his exemplary devotion and loyalty towards Lord Ram, as well as his humility, simplicity and lack of arrogance.

²It was a sort of lesson for the royal servants and attendants. They realized what good qualities a good servant should have, for the latter does not need prodding nor does he need to be told how best to serve his lord; what being loyal means, what is true devotion towards one's lord and master, what constitutes true humility and submission.]

दो०. भरत तीसरे पहर कहँ कीन्ह प्रबेसु प्रयाग ।
कहत राम सिय राम सिय उमगि उमगि अनुराग ॥ २०३ ॥
dōhā.

bharata tīsarē pahara kham' kīnha prabēsu prayāga.
kahata rāma siya rāma siya umagi umagi anurāga. 203.

Bharat entered the area around the pilgrim city of Prayag in late afternoon. He repeatedly uttered the name of Lord Ram and Sita even as he was overwhelmed with waves of affectionate emotions for them that seemed to heave over and over again in his heart. (Doha no. 203)

चौ०. झलका झलकत पायन्ह कैसें । पंकज कोस ओस कन जैसें ॥ १ ॥
भरत पयादेहिं आए आजू । भयउ दुखित सुनि सकल समाजू ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

jhalakā jhalakata pāyanha kaisēm. pañkaja kōsa ōsa kana jaisēm. 1.
bharata payādēhim ā'ē ājū. bhaya'u dukhita suni sakala samājū. 2.

Blisters that formed on the soles of Bharat's feet glistened in the same way as dew drops do on the petals of a lotus flower.¹ (1)

When the news spread amongst the people of the entourage that Bharat had walked bare foot (that caused blisters to form on his soles), everyone felt distressed and sad. (2)

[Note—¹We have read earlier in our narrative, in the form of an elaborate note appended to Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 141, that while traveling on the same path, Laxman and Sita did not have to suffer from any thorns pricking the soles of their feet, or any stones causing blisters either, though Lord Ram himself was pricked by sharp thorns, and during that discussion we have also examined why Laxman and Sita did not have to suffer this pain.

Now, here we find that Bharat had developed blisters on the soles of his feet. They were obviously caused by his walking barefoot* on hot ground littered with stones and thorns. {*Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 203 herein above.}

Why was Bharat made to suffer while Laxman and Sita weren't? Well, the answer that comes to mind is this: The Gods did not like Bharat going to the forest with the declared aim of bringing Lord Ram back to Ayodhya, and so if Bharat succeeded then the whole plan of the gods devised to eliminate the demons, their tormentors, would come crushing down. Obviously, they wanted to somehow deter or completely stop Bharat from proceeding ahead, and since they could not stop him physically, they created mischief and caused blisters to form on the soles of Bharat's feet so that he will not be able to walk any further, and eventually give up. The anxiety of the Gods is revealed at three places in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, viz. (a) Doha no. 217 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it; (b) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 265; and (c) Doha no. 294 along with Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes it.

In the three instances cited herein above, the selfish Gods were chided and rebuked by their Guru Vrishapati on the first two occasions, and by Saraswati, the goddess of wisdom, on the third occasion.

That said, what was the difference between Bharat's case and that of Laxman and Sita? This answer is also very obvious: While Bharat was on the mission to bring Lord Ram back, which if succeeded meant throwing a spanner in the wheel of what Gods wanted, but Laxman and Sita were going with Lord Ram to aid the Lord in successfully accomplishing what the Gods wanted—which was to eliminate the demons, an aim that would have been ruined if Lord Ram returned home.

Hence, the Gods did not create any hurdles for Laxman and Sita by making the path smooth and soft for them, while they tried their best to stop Bharat by making the same path difficult by it hot, and littering it with stones and thorns.]

खबरि लीन्ह सब लोग नहाए । कीन्ह प्रनामु त्रिबेनिहिं आए ॥ ३ ॥
सबिधि सितासित नीर नहाने । दिए दान महिसुर सनमाने ॥ ४ ॥

khabari līnha saba lōga nahā'ē. kīnha pranāmu tribēnihiṁ ā'ē. 3.
sabidhi sitāsita nīra nahānē. di'ē dāna mahisura sanamānē. 4.

After the party assembled for the evening, Bharat ascertained that everyone was okay and that things were in order.

Then after everyone had taken their evening baths, Bharat himself went to bow his head and offer his prayers to the presiding deity of the holy place known as Triveni (which is the confluence of the three holy rivers Ganges, Yamuna and Saraswati). (3)

At Triveni, Bharat took his bath by taking a dip in the water which has a colour formed by a combination of dark and bright hues as it was the point where rivers Yamuna and Ganges meet¹.

He made charities by offering alms to Brahmins and honoured them as part of his religious duties². (4)

[Note—¹It is believed that the water of river Yamuna has a dark colour, while that of Ganges is of a silvery hue.

²It is a standard practice amongst pilgrims and believers that in order to get religious merit and acquire spiritual gain when they go to a pilgrim place, they ought to first pray and take a purification bath in the holy river or any other water body at the site, which is to be followed by making charities by way of giving alms and honours to Brahmins residing at the place.

Bharat followed this tradition when he visited Triveni, the confluence of three holy rivers in the pilgrim city of Prayag.

We have read earlier that when Lord Ram visited Prayag, he too had prayed and taken a bath, as well as offered his worship to Lord Shiva—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 106. But we note here that no mention is made of Lord Ram giving away alms to Brahmins. Why? It is because the Lord was living the life of a hermit, and therefore he had nothing in the form of wealth with him which he could have distributed or disbursed as alms to others. On the other hand, Bharat was a prince, he was going to the forest as a prince on a long journey, and he had all sorts of supplies, including food items and money, with him for this journey, especially because he was not alone as was the case with Lord Ram, but had a long train of citizens to take care of, and so obviously he had embarked on this journey with a good supply of provisions of all kinds to support him. Besides this, if the need arose, messengers could be rushed back home to Ayodhya to get fresh supplies and replacements.

So therefore, it was not much difficult for Bharat to make donations wherever he thought fit, something Lord Ram could not do because of practical difficulties the Lord had faced.]

देखत स्यामल धवल हलोरे । पुलकि सरीर भरत कर जोरे ॥ ५ ॥

सकल काम प्रद तीरथराऊ । बेद बिदित जग प्रगट प्रभाऊ ॥ ६ ॥

dēkhata syāmala dhavala halōrē. pulaki sarīra bharata kara jōrē. 5.
sakala kāma prada tīratharā'ū. bēda bidita jaga pragaṭa prabhā'ū. 6.

Bharat stood and watched the waves of water having two distinct colours, one being dark and the other being of a silvery hue, come and go away repeatedly, a sight that held him in thrall and filled him with joy so much so that he brought the palms of his hands together as a gesture of offering his prayers at this natural phenomenon (as it reminded him of Lord Ram and Laxman respectively, because the Lord had a dark complexion, and Laxman a fair one). (5)

Bharat offered his prayers to the 'king of pilgrim places' (i.e. to Prayag, especially Triveni where the three holy rivers meet) as it grants fulfillment of all wishes of a

person. This glory of the holy site is well established in the Vedas, and is also well known throughout the world.¹ (6)

[Note—¹Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 105—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 106.]

मागउँ भीख त्यागि निज धरमू । आरत काह न करइ कुकरमू ॥ ७ ॥
अस जियँ जानि सुजान सुदानी । सफल करहिं जग जाचक बानी ॥ ८ ॥

māga'um' bhīkha tyāgi nija dharamū. ārata kāha na kara'i kukaramū. 7.
asa jiyam' jāni sujāna sudānī. saphala karahim' jaga jācaka bānī. 8.

[Keeping this in mind, that Prayag and its holy spot known as Triveni where the three holy rivers meet has the mystical ability to fulfill one's wishes, Bharat decided to use this opportunity to pray to the presiding deity of the place so that his own desires are fulfilled too.]

Bharat prayed: 'Oh the gracious Deity of Prayag! Please pay heed to me. I set aside the noble tradition that ordains that a prince of my race ought never to beg for anything no matter what happens, for I shall break this tradition for once, because a person in extreme distress and suffering from intense mental agony is liable to stoop low and do unexpected things that may be regarded as humiliating and demeaning for him, to beg of thee and pray to thee (i.e. to the holy deity presiding over Triveni) with utmost humility that I can garner. (7)

Realizing this, donors, who are generous, compassionate and magnanimous like thou art, wouldst always ensure that the prayers of those who humbly beg to have certain of their wishes fulfilled do not go in vain, and such persons are obliged and never turned away empty-handed.

[With this firm belief in my heart, I am bowing before thee to beg humbly that the only wish that I have shouldst also be honoured.]' (8)

[Note—¹Bharat politely addressed the deity of Prayag and submitted: "Oh honourable Deity of Prayag! Though I should not beg for anything as it is against principles and an dishonourable and demeaning thing for a noble prince to do so, no matter what misfortunes may befall upon him, yet I am so upset and distressed that I break this noble tradition, if by doing so my agonies and sufferings are somewhat alleviated. Hence, I expect forgiveness from thee, and also expect that thou wouldst live upto thine well-deserved and well-known reputation of fulfilling the wishes of those who pray to thee, by fulfilling my own wish."

What is Bharat's wish? We read about it in Doha no. 204 and Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that follow it herein below.]

दो०. अरथ न धरम न काम रुचि गति न चहउँ निरबान ।
जनम जनम रति राम पद यह बरदानु न आन ॥ २०४ ॥
dōhā.

aratha na dharama na kāma ruci gati na caha'um̐ nirabāna.
janama janama rati rāma pada yaha baradānu na āna. 204.

Bharat prayed to the deity of the holy place called Prayag, seeking this boon: ‘I am not interested in Artha (material wealth and prosperity), Dharma (following the scriptural sanctioned path of righteousness and probity), Kaam (fulfillment of worldly desires) or Nirvana (Moksha—emancipation and salvation of the soul). The only boon and reward that I want is this: that I may have unwavering, undiluted and true love and devotion for the holy feet of Lord Ram for all generations to come, for all times to come, and in all my future births.¹’ (Doha no. 204)

[Note—¹A similar boon has been sought by Baali, the monkey king of Kishkindha, at the time of his death—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chanda line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 10.

Bharat prayed to the presiding deity of Prayag as follows: “I have no desire for wealth and prosperity, or for the merit that is got by doing auspicious deeds and observing the principles of Dharma (righteousness), nor do I want fulfillment of any passions and acquiring worldly pleasures, and neither am I interested in attaining liberation and deliverance or eternal bliss for my soul.

The only blessing that I want is to have devotion and affection for the holy feet of Lord Ram for all generations to come, and in all my forms in which I am born again and again in accordance to the cycle of birth and death till I attain natural emancipation and salvation for myself.”

It ought to be noted here that Bharat has sought only one boon from the presiding deity of Prayag—which is to have undiluted devotion for Lord Ram, to have unstinted love and affection for Lord Ram and his holy feet. Indeed, this is the purest form of the virtue called Bhakti, or having devotion for Lord Ram.

A true devotee of the Lord does not want anything but love for the Lord and being able to serve the Lord’s holy feet, as this brings spiritual bliss, liberation, deliverance, emancipation, salvation and eternal joy to him automatically.]

चौ०. जानहुँ रामु कुटिल करि मोही । लोग कहउ गुर साहिब द्रोही ॥ १ ॥

सीता राम चरन रति मोरें । अनुदिन बढ़उ अनुग्रह तोरें ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

jānahum̐ rāmu kuṭila kari mōhī. lōga kaha'u gura sāhiba drōhī. 1.
sītā rāma carana rati mōrēm. anudina baṛha'u anugraha tōrēm. 2.

Bharat continued: ‘It may be that Lord Ram would treat me like I was a wicked person, or let the world call me an enemy of my Guru (teacher) or my Lord (Ram), --- (1)

--- But let it be clear that I am not concerned with anything. Let it be so that my love and devotion for the holy feet of Lord Ram and Sita is enhanced day by day (for it is the only thing about which I am concerned)². (2)

[Note—¹Bharat feels guilty in his conscience, and it has filled him with remorse. He is never able to overcome this feeling as is apparent later on in the story where we

shall read that on the last day of the fourteen-year period when he expected Lord Ram to return, he becomes very pensive and rues over the reasons of delay in the Lord's return. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 1.}

²A true devotee is not bothered about what the world says about him. His only concern is to ensure that his love and devotion for the Lord is not diminished even by a fraction. Nay, he wishes that his love and devotion for the Lord goes on increasing every moment of his life.

This sincere desire of Bharat, that he should have abiding love and devotion for Lord Ram, is remarkable, and it is a constant refrain in his prayers.]

जलदु जनम भरि सुरति बिसारउ । जाचत जलु पबि पाहन डारउ ॥ ३ ॥
चातकु रटनि घटें घटि जाई । बढें प्रेमु सब भाँति भलाई ॥ ४ ॥
कनकहिं बान चढ़इ जिमि दाहें । तिमि प्रियतम पद नेम निबाहें ॥ ५ ॥

jaladu janama bhari surati bisāra'u. jācata jalu pabi pāhana ḍāra'u. 3.
cātaku raṭani ghaṭēṁ ghaṭi jā'ī. baṛhēṁ prēmu saba bhāmṭi bhalā'ī. 4.
kanakahim bāna caṛha'i jimi dāhēṁ. timi priyatama pada nēma nibāhēṁ. 5.

[Citing the example of the bird known as Chatak (the sparrow hawk), Bharat says—] 'The cloud may neglect the Chatak for life and hit him hard with hail and lightning when the bird pleads for rain drops to quench its thirst, but the reputation of the Chatak would suffer and it would fall in the eyes of others if it turns away from the cloud and seeks water from any other source.¹ (3-4)

Even as gold acquires a radiant glow when it is heated in fire, a true lover's glory and fame are heightened if he is totally devoted to and surrendered in love for his lover².
(5)

[Note—¹This legendary bird is said to love the cloud so much that it has taken a vow that it would drink only rain drops to quench its thirst, and would prefer to die otherwise. Likewise, a true Bhakta would want no other boon or reward except to have love and devotion for the Lord God.

Bharat says: "Let my devotion and love for the holy feet of Lord Ram and Sita (the Lord's divine consort) increase day by day as a result of your (sage Bharadwaj's) blessings. Even if the cloud forgets about the Chatak for the entire duration of the latter's life and does not give the drop of rain this poor bird so earnestly requests the cloud for to quench its thirst, and may it be so that the cloud become so cruel and hostile that when the Chatak asks for a drop of rain the clouds angrily showers it with hail-stones and hits it with the thunderbolt (Vajra), the humble Chatak still longs for the single drop of rain that it expects the cloud to give it. The Chatak never thinks of breaking its vows of accepting no other drop of water except the one which is directly provided by the cloud, because if it does so its immaculate reputation as a lover of the cloud and a steadfast upholder of vows would suffer, and the Chatak does not want this ignominy to taint its wonderful reputation as a devoted lover of the cloud. Just like gold becoming purer when it is heated in the fire, the glory of a servant (devotee)

of the Lord shines and acquires fame when he is able to maintain his love, devotion and submission for the Lord under all situations and eventualities.”

²A true devotee of the Lord God has to pass through many tests in life where his faith and love for the Lord are tested. He is advised in these verses to remain steadfast in his conviction and endure whatever adversities come his way, as these tests would only bring out the spiritual shine him to the fore.]

भरत बचन सुनि माझ त्रिवेनी । भइ मृदु बानि सुमंगल देनी ॥ ६ ॥

तात भरत तुम्ह सब बिधि साधू । राम चरन अनुराग अगाधू ॥ ७ ॥

बादि गलानि करहु मन माहीं । तुम्ह सम रामहि कोउ प्रिय नाही ॥ ८ ॥

bharata bacana suni mājha tribēnī. bha'i mṛdu bāni sumaṅgala dēnī. 6.
tāta bharata tumha saba bidhi sādḥū. rāma carana anurāga agādhū. 7.
bādi galāni karahu mana māhīm. tumha sama rāmahi kō'u priya nāhīm. 8.

Hearing these sincere and honest words of Bharat, an auspicious and pleasant voice was heard from the middle of the water at the confluence of the three rivers known as 'Triveni'. (6)

[This voice was of the 'deity of Triveni'.] It said: 'Dear Bharat (tāta bharata)! Thou art truly a saintly soul by all means, and at the same time thou havest immeasurable devotion and love for the holy feet of Lord Ram. (7)

This being so, thou ought to banish all sorts of regrets and grief from thine heart, because (it is a matter of fact that) no one else is dearer to Lord Ram than thou art.¹ (8)

[Note—¹The deity of Triveni assured Bharat that it can vouchsafe and say with conviction that Lord Ram loves him very dearly, so much so that the Lord's love and affection for Bharat is much more than what the Lord has for anyone else. Hence, Bharat ought not to worry, and feel so sorry and remorseful; he must not think that Lord Ram does not love him, or that the Lord doubts Bharat's integrity and affection for him because of the unfortunate developments that have created the erroneous impression that Bharat is opposed to Lord Ram. Nothing of this kind of thing exists.]

दो०. तनु पुलकेउ हियँ हरषु सुनि बेनि बचन अनुकूल ।

भरत धन्य कहि धन्य सुर हरषित बरषहि फूल ॥ २०५ ॥

dōhā.

tanu pulakē'u hiyaṁ' haraṣu suni bēni bacana anukūla.
bharata dhan'ya kahi dhan'ya sura haraṣita baraṣahim phūla. 205.

This favourable assurance from the deity of Triveni made Bharat feel exhilarated in his heart so much so that his body was thrilled.

When the gods heard it, they were all praise for Bharat, for they exclaimed repeatedly “glory to Bharat”, and to show their happiness and pleasure they showered flowers upon him from the heavens¹. (Doha no. 205)

[Note—¹The gods have been depicted in the story of Ram Charit Manas as being fickle-minded, fidgety, nervous, cowardly and weak*1, as well as being utterly selfish*2, whimsical, unpredictable and illogical*3, prone to jealousy*4, and becoming inimical or hostile towards a person*5 when it suits them.

There are umpteen numbers of instances of this. Apropos:-

*1Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 182-b along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 82; (b) Lanka Kand, (iii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 93; (iv) Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 96.

*2Ram Charit Manas, (a) Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 12; (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 220; (iii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 220; (iv) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 294; (v) Doha no. 295 along with Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes it; (b) Lanka Kand, (vi) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 110.

*3Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chanda line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 96; (b) Ayodhya Kand, (ii) Doha no. 77; (iii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 48; (iv) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 119—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 120.

*4Ram Charit Manas, (a) Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 2-6 that precede Doha no. 120.

*5Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8 and Chanda line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 96; (b) Ayodhya Kand, (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 49; (iii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 119; (iv) Chanda line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 201; (v) Chanda line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 276.

This unfortunate observation about the nature of the gods will be proved shortly, because while they are all praises for Bharat now, a little later they would become apprehensive of him and try to oppose him. They would try to devise a device whereby Bharat is prevented from meeting Lord Ram in the first place, and later on they try to create mischief so that Bharat fails to prevail upon the Lord to return home—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 217 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 265; (iii) Doha no. 294—Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 296.

To wit, when it suited the gods they would hail the person and shower flowers on him, and when it did not suit them then they would go to any extent to throw a spanner in the wheel and try to ruin everything.]

चौ०. प्रमुदित तीरथराज निवासी । बैखानस बटु गृही उदासी ॥ १ ॥

कहहिं परसपर मिलि दस पाँचा । भरत सनेहु सीलु सुचि साँचा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

pramudita tīratharāja nivāsī. baikhānasa baṭu gr̥hī udāsī. 1.

kahahim parasapara mili dasa pām̐cā. bharata sanēhu sīlu suci sām̐cā. 2.

The residents of Prayag, which is like a king amongst all the pilgrim places (tīratharāja), including recluses, young religious students, householders and those who practiced renunciation, were all very glad (when they heard what the deity of Triveni had to say about Bharat)¹. (1)

They gathered together in groups of five and ten people and talked amongst themselves about Bharat's affable and amiable nature, his good manners and courteousness, the purity of his heart, and the truthfulness of his devotion and love for Lord Ram that he professed. [This is because they had heard the deity of Triveni endorsing Bharat's sincerity and devotion for Lord Ram, and hence there was no trace of doubt left about his integrity and honest manners.] (2)

[Note—¹Let us remember that Bharat was accompanied by a huge entourage, and so his arrival at Prayag could not remain a private affair, but it was a momentous occasion for its residents. These people had earlier met Lord Ram too, and so they were aware of the whole story behind the Lord being sent to the forest—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 108.

Everyone was eager to know what kind of person Bharat was, and when they learnt about his good intentions and nature by hearing the deity of Triveni praising Bharat, and then they saw the gods showering flowers upon him, there was no doubt left in the people's mind about the goodness of Bharat.]

सुनत राम गुन ग्राम सुहाए । भरद्वाज मुनिबर पहिं आए ॥ ३ ॥

दंड प्रनामु करत मुनि देखे । मूरतिमंत भाग्य निज लेखे ॥ ४ ॥

धाड़ उठाड़ लाड़ उर लीन्हें । दीन्हि असीस कृतारथ कीन्हें ॥ ५ ॥

sunata rāma guna grāma suhā'ē. bharadvāja munibara pahim ā'ē. 3.
daṇḍa pranāmu karata muni dēkhē. mūratimanta bhāgya nija lēkhē. 4.
dhā'i uṭhā'i lā'i ura līnhē. dīnhi asīsa kṛtāratha kīnhē. 5.

After taking bath at Triveni, Bharat moved on, and on the way he heard the villagers and other common folks praising Lord Ram's virtues and glories, and by-and-by he arrived at the hermitage of sage Bharadwaj¹. (3)

When the sage saw Bharat prostrating on the ground before him to pay his respects, the sage felt as if all his good fortunes have come personified in the form of Bharat to visit him. (4)

The sage got up immediately and rushed to meet Bharat enthusiastically. He lifted Bharat from the ground (where the latter lay prostrated), embraced him very affectionately, and gratified Bharat by blessing him liberally². (5)

[Note—¹The meeting between Bharat and sage Bharadwaj has also been described in Veda Vyas' "Adhyatma Ramayan", Ayodhya Kand, Canto 8, verse nos. 42-58.

²A similar situation had prevailed when Lord Ram went to visit sage Bharadwaj—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 106 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it.]

आसनु दीन्ह नाइ सिरु बैठे । चहत सकुच गृहं जनु भजि पैठे ॥ ६ ॥
 मुनि पूँछब कछु यह बड़ सोचू । बोले रिषि लिख सीलु संकोचू ॥ ७ ॥
 सुनहु भरत हम सब सुधि पाई । बिधि करतब पर किछु न बसाई ॥ ८ ॥

āsanu dīnha nā'i siru baiṭhē. cahata sakuca gr̥ham' janu bhaji paiṭhē. 6.
 muni pūm'chaba kachu yaha barā sōcū. bōlē riṣi lakhi silu sam'kōcū. 7.
 sunahu bharata hama saba sudhi pā'ī. bidhi karataba para kichu na basā'ī. 8.

The sage offered a seat to Bharat to sit down. Bharat obeyed him, but he sat down silently with a lowered head as if he was extremely ashamed to face the sage¹. (6)

He (Bharat) was uneasy with the thought that the sage would ask him about the developments and put some embarrassing questions before him to seek an answer².

Meanwhile, the learned sage observed Bharat's embarrassment and hesitation that made him sit quietly with a lowered head. So, the sage took the initiative to speak to Bharat to start a conversation. (7)

The sage said: 'Listen Bharat, I have full knowledge of everything that had happened, but alas, one does not have the power to override the fiat of Fate and go against the doings of the Creator³.' (8)

[Note—¹Why was Bharat ashamed to face the sage? It was because he was feeling guilty to have been the cause of Lord Ram going to the forest. Remember: Nishad had accompanied Lord Ram to sage Bharadwaj's hermitage, and he had heard the conversation between the two. So it is obvious he must have briefed Bharat about Lord Ram's visit to the sage, and what transpired during the meeting. It meant that the sage was aware of the developments in Ayodhya as well as the reason why Lord Ram had come to the forest. It being so, Bharat could not gather courage to see the sage in the eye.

Hence, he sat down like a sinner or a culprit facing a senior person, afraid that he would be grilled and held accountable for all the mischief that has been caused by him or in his name.

²Bharat was apprehensive of how the sage would treat him; whether the sage would strongly admonish him in public, or ask him bluntly how come he had become so selfish as to have swept all norms and principles of Dharma under the carpet in order to grab the crown of the kingdom? Should the sage ask him such embarrassing questions, what answer would he give to prove that he was innocent, and even if he gathered courage to put forward his case, will the sage be convinced of his innocence?

That is why Bharat sat with a lowered head, feeling heavy with guilt, and failing to gather courage to face the sage directly.

³To wit, there are instances in one's life when things go in a direction not expected by anyone, and over which no one is able to exercise any control. In this situation, it is

wiser to accept the will of God and stay calm. There is no use in such situations to lament and regret, to fret and fume, because it's a waste of energy, and losing the opportunity to save whatever is left out of the wreckage. Remember: one cannot supersede the will of God, the fiat of Fate, the dictates of Destiny, and the provisions of Providence. It is wiser therefore, to accept them and move on in one's life.

Look at the positive side of this situation that may have seemed disastrous at the first instance; upon deep thought one would come around to understand that whatever happened was for good. See, Lord Ram's fame and glory and virtues had been unequivocally established because of how calmly he treated this misfortune and went to the forest to obey his father. Likewise, this development has also brought out the shine in your own character, for now the whole world knows how devoted and loving you are towards Lord Ram, about your excellent virtues and good nature. All this goodness and glory would have remained unknown, unexposed, unproved and untested had the things not gone the way they did.]

दो०. तुम्ह गलानि जियँ जनि करहु समुझि मातु करतूति ।
तात कैकड़हि दोसु नहिं गई गिरा मति धूति ॥ २०६ ॥

dōhā.

tumha galāni jiyam̐ jani karahu samujhi mātu karatūti.
tāta kaika'ihī dōsu nahim̐ ga'ī girā mati dhūti. 206.

Sage Bharadwaj told Bharat: 'Do not feel remorseful or guilty in your heart for whatever your mother has done—for Kaikeyi is not at fault at all, because goddess of wisdom and speech (Saraswati) had deluded her mind and trapped her into committing this mischief¹. ' (Doha no. 206)

[Note—¹Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 11—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes 23.

We have already read in the verses cited herein above as to how the gods had prevailed upon Saraswati to go and do something so that Lord Ram could go to the forest. Since Saraswati controls mind and intellect, it was easy for her to tweak the wisdom of both Manthara and Kaikeyi so much so that first Manthara became unnecessarily jealous of Lord Ram and suspicious of Lord Ram's mother Kaushalya, and then Kaikeyi, who loved Lord Ram very dearly and was happy that the Lord would ascend the throne, suddenly became hostile towards him on the instigation of Manthara, who in turn was acting at the behest of Saraswati.

This is the first time that Bharat became aware of the secret cause of all the mischief done by his mother. This is the reason why he had not scolded her anymore, though he never talked with her for the rest of his life. Sage Bharadwaj's affectionate words helped Bharat to overcome his guilt to a great extent, and he felt comforted in his heart.

That said, a pertinent question arises in our mind: Did Kaikeyi ever regret her mistakes; did she feel ashamed at what she had done; did she repent for her misdeeds? The answer is 'yes', she had regretted her actions for the rest of her life*1, and the fact that the ignominy, the public scorn and universal condemnation that she had to face was a stigma that stuck to her name forever*2, so much so that her own son, for

whom she had acted so wickedly and selfishly, had vowed never to see her face as long as he lived*3.

{*1Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 207 herein below.

*2Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 47; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 51; (iii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 84; (iv) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 89; (v) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 110; (vi) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 111; (vii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 122.

*3Refer: Geetawali Ramayan, Uttar Kand, verse no. 37.}]

चौ०. यहउ कहत भल कहिहि न कोऊ । लोकु बेदु बुध संमत दोऊ ॥ १ ॥

तात तुम्हार बिमल जसु गाई । पाइहि लोकउ बेदु बड़ाई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

yaha'u kahata bhala kahihi na kō'ū. lōku bēdu budha sammata dō'ū. 1.

tāta tumhāra bimala jasu gā'ī. pā'ihī lōka'u bēdu baṛā'ī. 2.

Sage Bharadwaj continued: 'Even what I have said above (in Doha no. 206) would not be held in good light and approved by those who are wise, learned and enlightened in the world¹. (1)

My dear (tāta), the world as well as the Vedas (ancient scriptures) would always sing your glories (and your name will remain untainted and remembered with reverence and honour in the annals of history)². (2)

[Note—¹Why? Well, the answer is found at a number of places in Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 52; (ii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 56; (iii) Doha no. 124-a; (iv) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 128; (v) Doha no. 174; (b) Ayodhya Kand, (vi) Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 150; (vii) Doha no. 171.

The idea is that it is useless to blame any particular person or god or goddess or situation or circumstance for any misfortune that befalls upon someone—because what is destined to happen would invariably happen. We have Lord Shiva himself endorsing this view*1, as well as sage Vasistha*2. In fact, Shiva's own consort Sati would not listen to him, and she went to the extent of doubting Lord Ram's divinity and holiness so much so that she went to test the Lord much against the wishes of her husband. The consequences was that she died, and Lord Shiva could not save her*3. The idea is that what is designed by fate cannot be changed.

Hence, it is futile to single out Saraswati or Kaikeyi for the misfortunes that unfolded in Ayodhya. Bharat therefore ought not to regret that his mother Kaikeyi has brought so much infamy to him, for she is not to be blamed for anything. And similarly, neither should he regret that Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman had been put to so much troubles and misery due to him, for he too is not at fault himself. To wit, no one is to be blamed for anything that has happened.

Forsooth and without gainsay, nothing happens without the knowledge and consent of Lord Ram, who is the Supreme Being himself in a human form. It was the Lord's wish that he must go to the forest to fulfill his obligations to eliminate the

demons and grant freedom from their terror to the gods, mother earth and her inhabitants*4 that the things unfolded the way they did, for it cannot be otherwise*5.

{*1Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 56.

*2Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 171.

*3Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 62; (ii) Doha no. 64 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it.

*4Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 187.

*5Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 52.}

²Sage Bharadwaj was all praise for Bharat, and the sage has repeatedly proclaimed his respect for him—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 208; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 3-6 that precede Doha no. 210.

Let alone the sage, even Lord Ram had lavishly praised Bharat and endorsed his excellent character while telling Laxman not to feel bad about him—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 231—to Doha no. 232.]

लोक बेद संमत सबु कहई । जेहि पितु देइ राजु सो लहई ॥ ३ ॥

राउ सत्यव्रत तुम्हहि बोलाई । देत राजु सुखु धरमु बड़ाई ॥ ४ ॥

lōka bēda sammata sabu kahaī. jēhi pitu dē'i rāju sō lahaī. 3.
rā'u satyabrata tumhahi bōlāī. dēta rāju sukhu dharamu barāī. 4.

It has been an established tradition in the world, and it is also endorsed by the Vedas that whosoever the father (in this case, the king) decides to appoint as his heir to succeed him on the throne should get the crown of the kingdom¹. (3)

The king (Dasrath) was very truthful and an upholder of the sanctity of his words of honour². He had called you to anoint you to the throne of the kingdom. It is a matter of great honour for you that the king decided to anoint you and grant you with honour and fame³. (4)

[Note—¹Sage Vasistha too has said the same thing to Bharat—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 174.

²We have read earlier that sage Vasistha too had praised king Dasrath lavishly in this respect—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 171.

³Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 2-6 that precede Doha no. 174; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 175. Here we read how sage Vasistha has tried to convince Bharat to accept the crown as it was the wish of his father which he must honour, and by doing so he would gain glory and not infamy.]

राम गवनु बन अनरथ मूला । जो सुनि सकल बिस्व भइ सूला ॥ ५ ॥
सो भावी बस रानि अयानी । करि कुचालि अंतहुँ पछितानी ॥ ६ ॥

rāma gavanu bana anaratha mūlā. jō suni sakala bisva bha'i sūlā. 5.
sō bhāvī basa rāni ayānī. kari kucālī antahum̐ pachitānī. 6.

It is indeed true, and there is no denying of it, that Lord Ram going to the forest has been very unfortunate, and this development has been like a thorn that has caused so much untold grief and pain to one and all in this world. (5)

The queen (Kaikeyi, your mother) was influenced by fate and providence over which she had no control, and being driven by these forces she committed a misdeed¹ that left her regretting at the end.

[To wit, Kaikeyi was so deluded under the influence of fate and providence that she could not think properly and lost her wisdom and prudence, for she did something from which she gained nothing except infamy, and had to regret sorely for it for the rest of her life.]² (6)

[Note—¹Sage Bharadwaj has already said that one has no control over the whims and fancies of the Creator who had maneuvered things in such a way that Lord Ram had to go to the forest, and unfortunately he (the Creator) made Kaikeyi his tool to give effect to his nasty plans. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 206 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it herein above.}

²Earlier, king Dasrath had warned Kaikeyi that if she goes ahead with her wicked plan and persists in sending Lord Ram to the forest, then she would have to repent for the rest of her life—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 34.]

तहँउँ तुम्हार अलप अपराधू । कहै सो अधम अयान असाधू ॥ ७ ॥
करतेहु राजु त तुम्हहि न दोषू । रामहि होत सुनत संतोषू ॥ ८ ॥

taham̐ tumhāra alapa aparādhū. kahai sō adhama ayāna asādhū. 7.
karatēhu rāju ta tumhahi na dōṣū. rāmahī hōta sunata santōṣū. 8.

Even after what thy mother had done in thy name, if anyone accuses thee of any sort of wrongdoing, of being in connivance with her, or says that thou wert a part of the conspiracy, and hence liable to be equally blamed for what had happened— then I say with conviction that such a person who falsely accuses you is in the wrong himself; such a person is ignorant of the facts and has gone astray from the path of truth, and he is surely not a saintly person with a pious heart (to have cast aspersions on thee who art absolutely innocent and pure in heart, who loves Lord Ram dearly and is devoted to him)¹. (7)

If you had accepted the crown to rule over the kingdom, then also you would not have done anything wrong², and Lord Ram would have approved of it and felt satisfied³. (8)

[Note—¹Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 184 where a similar idea has been expressed by all the citizens, including the ministers and courtiers, when Bharat had declared his intention not to accept the crown but go to the forest to meet Lord Ram instead.

²Bharat would not be accused of any wrongdoing because he would be simply honouring his father's wish in the same way as Lord Ram had gone to the forest to honour the king's words—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 95.

Sage Vasistha has expressed a similar view in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 174 along with Chaupai line nos. 2-6 that precede it; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 175.

³Sage Vasistha was of the same view—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 175.

Lord Ram would have felt satisfied that Bharat has lived upto his duties and responsibilities—for the Lord had left a message for Bharat to this effect as clearly stated in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-6 that precede Doha no. 152.]

दो०. अब अति कीन्हेहु भरत भल तुम्हहि उचित मत एहु ।

सकल सुमंगल मूल जग रघुबर चरन सनेहु ॥ २०७ ॥

dōhā.

aba ati kīnhēhu bharata bhala tumhahi ucita mata ēhu.
sakala sumaṅgala mūla jaga raghubara carana sanēhu. 207.

Nevertheless Bharat, what you have decided to do presently¹ is an excellent thing to do, and in my view it is also the correct thing—because to have devotion and affection for the holy feet of Lord Ram is the root of all well-being, all wellness, all auspiciousness and all good fortunes². (Doha no. 207)

[Note—¹Bharat had taken a conscious decision not to accept the crown inspite of everyone trying to make him do so, even telling him that if he accepted the crown he would be doing the right thing. But Bharat had flatly refused to oblige, saying that his welfare lay in serving Lord Ram, and not in accepting the crown. In fact, this decision of Bharat, to not accept the crown but instead go to the forest and bring Lord Ram back after asking the Lord to forgive him, had made Bharat very dear to every single citizen of Ayodhya.

These things have been clearly narrated in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 171—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 184.

²So therefore, sage Bharadwaj says that he endorses Bharat's approach that the latter's best lies in serving Lord Ram, and that Bharat exemplifies the virtues of love and devotion for the Lord (apropos: Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 208—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 210 herein below).

In this connection, refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 184 (citizens of Ayodhya); (ii) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 205 (deity of Triveni).]

चौ०. सो तुम्हार धनु जीवनु प्राना । भूरिभाग को तुम्हहि समाना ॥ १ ॥

यह तुम्हार आचरजु न ताता । दसरथ सुअन राम प्रिय भ्राता ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sō tumhāra dhanu jīvanu prānā. bhūribhāga kō tumhahi samānā. 1.
yaha tumhāra ācaraju na tātā. dasaratha su'ana rāma priya bhrātā. 2.

Sage Bharadwaj continued: 'This virtue (of having undiluted and truthful affection for Lord Ram as well as sincere devotion for the Lord's holy feet) is sacrosanct for you, and you have held it to be your only asset and the basic principle of life; nay, it is precious virtue that is as dear to as your own life.

Oh Bharat! Forsooth and without gainsay, who is more fortunate and blessed than thou art¹? (1)

But it is no wonder that it be so in your case, because thou art the blessed son of king Dasrath, and a dear brother of Lord Ram.

[To wit, you have inherited love, affection and devotion for Lord Ram from your father, and from the Lord himself you have learnt what is meant by brotherly love and affection, what is selflessness and sacrifice, what is the importance of dispassion and renunciation, the value of respecting other's rights as well as honouring one's responsibilities and duties, and such other exemplary qualities practiced by Lord Ram himself.]² (2)

[Note—¹In this context, refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 184; (ii) Doha no. 185 along with Chaupai line nos. 2, 4 that precede it.

In the aforesaid verses we read that the citizens of Ayodhya have also praised Bharat's love and devotion for Lord Ram, and they too have declared that this virtue is to be treated as the best one in a person's life, for everything else comes second to it—refer especially to Doha no. 185.

²A son inherits the characters and virtues of his father. In the present case, king Dasrath himself loved Lord Ram most dearly and was extremely devoted to him so much so that he preferred death to life when forced to be separated from the Lord. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 33; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 82 (Dasrath himself declares his love for Lord Ram); (iii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 171; (iv) Doha no. 173 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede it (sage Vasistha's praise for Dasrath); and (iv) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 211 (Bharat says to Bharadwaj).

So, sage Bharadwaj says that Bharat has inherited this virtue of having love and devotion for Lord Ram from his father Dasrath.

As for Lord Ram, the sage means that all the brothers shared such mutual affection for each other that it has no match in this world. This is evident Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 198.

Lord Ram embodied the virtues of love, affection, compassion, grace, equality and sharing everything with others, and these qualities of the Lord were apparent even during his childhood days as is clearly hinted in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1, 4-5 that precede Doha no. 205.

Further, Lord Ram had been reluctant to accept the crown to the exclusion of his other brothers as is clearly mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 10.

Bharat has himself said that as children, the Lord would lose a game himself so that Bharat could win it, and the Lord loved Bharat so much that even if the latter was wrong on some point, the Lord would never admonish him—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 260 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede it.

And just like Lord Ram, Bharat too paid no heed to the caste or social standing of Guha Nishad while embracing and befriending him—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 88 (Lord Ram meeting Nishad); and (ii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 193—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 194 (Bharat meeting Nishad).]

सुनुहु भरत रघुबर मन माहीं । पेम पात्रु तुम्ह सम कोउ नाहीं ॥ ३ ॥

लखन राम सीतहि अति प्रीती । निसि सब तुम्हहि सराहत बीती ॥ ४ ॥

sunahu bharata raghubara mana māhīm. pēma pātru tumha sama kō'u nāhīm. 3.

lakhana rāma sītahi ati prītī. nisi saba tumhahi sarāhata bītī. 4.

[In order to comfort Bharat and help him overcome his sense of guilt, shame and remorse, Sage Bharadwaj reiterated—] ‘Listen Bharat, in Lord Ram’s heart there is no one who is more worthy of love and affection than thou art.

[To wit, Lord Ram loves thee more than anyone else.]¹ (3)

Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman, all the three have so much affection for thee that when they spent the night here in my hermitage on their way to the forest, they had been praising thee and thine virtues the whole night. (4)

[Note—¹The deity of Triveni has also declared it in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 205.]

जाना मरमु नहात प्रयागा । मगन होहिं तुम्हरे अनुरागा ॥ ५ ॥

तुम्ह पर अस सनेहु रघुबर केँ । सुख जीवन जग जस जड़ नर केँ ॥ ६ ॥

jānā maramu nahāta prayāgā. magana hōhir̥ tumharēm anurāgā. 5.
tumha para asa sanēhu raghubara kēm. sukha jīvana jaga jasa jara nara kēm.
6.

When thou hadst taken a bath at Prayag (i.e. at the confluence of the three holy rivers that is known as Triveni), thou must have come to know about it (because the deity of Triveni has said it to thee herself)¹, so much so that this news has spread throughout the place, and everyone is mesmerized by the Lord's love and affection for thee*.

[*There is another way of interpreting this particular verse as follows: "While they, i.e. Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman, were taking a bath at Prayag, the deity of the place had told them about thy devotion for Lord Ram, just like the deity has told thee that the Lord loves thee very much whilst thou wert bathing there a little while ago¹, and this information filled Lord Ram with exhilaration, for he was extremely pleased to learn about the intensity of thy love, affection and devotion for him."] (5)

The love and affection that Lord Ram (raghubara) has for thee is comparable to the way a person loves or longs to live a happy, easy and comfortable life in this world².
(6)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 205.

²The actual phrase used in the verse for a person who longs to have a happy, easy and comfortable life is "jara nara"—which technically would mean a foolish man. It is to indicate that life in this world is transient, all living beings are mortal, and all the comforts and pleasures of the world are temporary. In spite of this fact, a person still longs for it, for he is deluded and thinks that the world is real and permanent. Hence, he is a 'fool'. But this should not be used to construe that Lord Ram loved Bharat foolishly, like a 'fool loves the world'. It is just a figure of speech to stress how intensely and deeply the Lord loved his younger brother, because a man would go to any extent to have comfort, happiness, pleasures and enjoyments of material things in this world. He would be ready to sacrifice anything, even his own relatives and family members, or any of the assets he possesses if he is promised that he could achieve this goal by doing so. Likewise, Lord Ram loves Bharat greatly, no matter what cost it means to him.]

यह न अधिक रघुबीर बड़ाई । प्रनत कुटुंब पाल रघुराई ॥ ७ ॥

तुम्ह तौ भरत मोर मत एहू । धरें देह जनु राम सनेहू ॥ ८ ॥

yaha na adhika raghubīra barā'ī. pranata kuṭumba pāla raghurā'ī. 7.
tumha tau bharata mōra mata ēhū. dharēm dēha janu rāma sanēhū. 8.

This is not unexpected from Lord Ram, and neither it is to extravagantly praise him (that he loves you so much)—for it is the Lord's inherent nature and basic character that he takes care of all those who are devoted to him, along with their kith and kin¹.
(7)

In my opinion, oh Bharat, thou seem to be an embodiment of the virtues of love and affection that one ought to have for Lord Ram; thou personifies these glorious virtues. (8)

[Note—¹To wit, it is the habit of Lord Ram to show affection to all such persons, and take special care of all those who are devoted to him and love him. Nay, the Lord also extends this grace to all others who are dependants of the Lord's devotee, such as the latter's kith and kin. Hence, it is but natural for Lord Ram to love Bharat so much because the latter is not only the Lord's younger brother, but he also loves the Lord dearly himself, and is also very devoted to him.]

दो०. तुम्ह कहँ भरत कलंक यह हम सब कहँ उपदेसु ।
राम भगति रस सिद्धि हित भा यह समउ गनेसु ॥ २०८ ॥

dōhā.

tumha kaham̐ bharata kalaṅka yaha hama saba kaham̐ upadēsu.
rāma bhagati rasa sid'dhi hita bhā yaha sama'u ganēsu. 208.

Thou havest a regret that the developments (that led to Lord Ram going to the forest) are a blot on thine name, but for us it is a practical lesson in how to love the Lord, and what constitutes the virtue of true love—for it is the time for us to begin to learn (bhā sama'u ganēsu) how one can achieve success in cultivating the virtues of devotion and affection for Lord Ram (rāma bhagati rasa sid'dhi hita) by closely observing and learning from thy own example. (Doha no. 208)

[Note—Sage Bharadwaj says: “Oh Bharat, thou hast set an example for the rest of us as how to love and have devotion for Lord Ram, so much so that even the deities of holy places and the gods would praise such virtues in a person. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 205 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it.}

Thou hast shown us what renunciation and sacrifice means, for thou havest refused to accept the crown and its accompanying material comforts and pleasures as a means of doing a great sacrifice and practicing self-restraint so that thou canst do penance and repentance for the misdeeds of someone else, in this case thy own mother Kaikeyi.

Thou hast also shown that when it comes to having devotion and love for Lord Ram, nothing else matters; nothing should be allowed to come in the way. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 185.}”]

चौ०. नव बिधु बिमल तात जसु तोरा । रघुबर किंकर कुमुद चकोरा ॥ १ ॥
उदित सदा अँथइहि कबहूँ ना । घटिहि न जग नभ दिन दिन दूना ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

nava bidhu bimala tāta jasu tōrā. raghubara kiṅkara kumuda cakōrā. 1.
udita sadā am̐tha'ihī kabahūm̐ nā. ghaṭīhi na jaga nabha dina dina dūnā. 2.

Sage Bharadwaj told Bharat: ‘My dear (tāta)! Your glories and virtues are like a new full moon shining in the sky, whilst the devotees of Lord Ram (raghubara) are like so many water lilies (that are so fond of the moon that they open their petals only in the moonlight) and the bird known as Chakor (the Indian red-legged partridge—which is also so enamoured of the moon that it fixes its gaze on the moon as soon as it rises in the eastern horizon, and then follows its path across the sky till it sets in the west, all the while tilting its head so that it never loses the sight of the moon)¹. (1)

But whereas the moon rises and sets in the sky, and also waxes and wanes, your glories and virtues as well as the fame that you have acquired would not only remain permanent but would continue to flourish and spread in the firmament of the world². (2)

[Note—¹Just like the water lily and the Chakor bird, the devotees of Lord Ram would always look upto Bharat for guidance and as a benchmark for purity of love and devotion for Lord Ram, and use his example in order to develop and practice a similar sort of devotion and love for the Lord.

²To wit, Bharat’s glories and good deeds would be remembered for all times to come, and this would give abiding joy and happiness to the devotees of Lord Ram who would adore Bharat’s love and devotion for the Lord.

Further, unlike the moon that changes every night, and its best form of a full silvery disc lasts only for a single night, Bharat’s glories and acclaim would be steady, eternal and undisputed in the annals of history.]

कोक तिलोक प्रीति अति करिही । प्रभु प्रताप रबि छबिहि न हरिही ॥ ३ ॥
निसि दिन सुखद सदा सब काहू । गसिहि न कैकड़ करतबु राहू ॥ ४ ॥

kōka tilōka prīti ati karihī. prabhu pratāpa rabi chabihi na harihī. 3.
nisi dina sukhada sadā saba kāhū. grasihi na kaika'i karatabu rāhū. 4.

The bird known as Koka (ruddy goose), representing all the three divisions of the world would, immensely adore and respect it (i.e. Bharat’s excellent glories, virtues, character, good manners and deeds would be praised and toasted by the entire world), and even the fame of Lord Ram, his legendary glories and virtues which themselves are as radiant and splendid as the sun, would however not be able to dim the shine that you possess¹. (3)

Thine example of exemplary devotion, as well as the unparalleled love and affection for Lord Ram that thou have wouldst grant immense joy and happiness to everyone, every day and night of their lives, and unlike Rahu² that devours the moon so that the latter loses its shine and glory periodically (during the lunar eclipse), the misdeeds of Kaikeyi would never be able to eclipse the fame, acclaim and honour that belongs to thee. (4)

[Note—¹The sun’s brilliance dims the shine of the moon in the sky. Since sage Bharadwaj has compared the fame, glories and virtues of Lord Ram to the sun, he goes on to say that as far as Bharat is concerned, the Lord’s fame would not stand in

the way of Bharat's own acclaim and his grand reputation in the world, and nor would his goodness and excellence ever diminish or get undermined when one would compare them with those of Lord Ram, for Bharat would be like another sun in his own right, just like the moon that has lordship over the sky during the night with the sun not being able to interfere with the moon's majesty in his own domain, the night sky.

Earlier, Bharat has honoured and praised Lord Ram as being the most glorious Lord in the world—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 200. So, here sage Bharadwaj intends to tell Bharat that though it is true that the glory of Lord Ram shines in the world with all its splendour, but it won't affect Bharat's own glories which would have their own independent importance, standing and value.

²According to mythological accounts, a demon named Rahu devours the Moon God periodically, which causes the lunar eclipse. Since sage Bhardwaj has likened Bharat to a full moon in verse no. 1 herein above, he clarifies that the demon represented by the wickedness of his mother Kaikeyi, and the misdeeds she has done, would not tarnish his image, which would continue to have its shine and glory, untainted and undiminished.]

पूरन राम सुपेम पियूषा । गुर अवमान दोष नहिं दूषा ॥ ५ ॥
राम भगत अब अमिअँ अघाहूँ । कीन्हेहु सुलभ सुधा बसुधाहूँ ॥ ६ ॥

pūrana rāma supēma piyūṣā. gura avamāna dōṣa nahim dūṣā. 5.
rāma bhagata aba ami'am' aghāhūṁ. kīnhēhu sulabha sudhā basudhāhūṁ. 6.

Verily indeed, this glory of yours is soaked in the ambrosia symbolizing love and devotion for Lord Ram, and this ambrosia is so powerful in neutralizing all sorts of poisons that even the sinful act of disobeying thine guru (sage Vasistha)¹ would not be able to affect thee and tarnish thy reputation. (5)

Forsooth, thou hast blessed the whole world by making this remarkable ambrosia (of devotion, love and affection for Lord Ram) easily available to all (by thyself setting an example), so that even a lay person would be able to benefit from it, and enjoy its nectarine happiness and bliss (by emulating thee). (6)

[Note—¹This is indeed a remarkable observation of sage Bhardwaj, and it is in accordance with the cardinal principle that governs the rule for having true devotion for Lord Ram as stressed in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 185. This verse says that anything that comes in the way of one having devotion for Lord Ram, instead of helping the devotee to attain this glorious virtue, ought to perish and be burnt to ashes.

Now, as we have read earlier, sage Vasistha had tried to persuade Bharat to accept the crown and rule the kingdom, instead of advising him that the best course of action for him would be to go to Lord Ram and ask for forgiveness, bring him back, and serve him. Even Bharat had hinted at his annoyance at sage Vasistha and other advisors for giving him a wrong advice, and he has vented his angst at them by using polite but sarcastic language as is clear when we read Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya

Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 177; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 181—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 182.

Ordinarily, to disobey one's guru is a big sin, but Bharat was absolved of committing any wrongdoing because his only reason for defying the guru's advice was that his decision to do so was based on the purity of the virtues of devotion, love and affection for Lord Ram that he had. But the world is such a nasty and jealous place that people are always skeptical and suspicious about the best of intentions that a person may have. So, in order to dispel such doubts and suspicions in the minds of the people, vis-à-vis the fate of Bharat for disobeying his guru, and settle the matter for good, sage Bharadwaj emphatically asserts here by assuring Bharat, in front of others who were present there during their meeting, that even the sin of disobeying the guru would not stick to him because the virtue of love and devotion for Lord Ram that he has in his heart has neutralized its bad effects.]

भूप भगीरथ सुरसरि आनी । सुमिरत सकल सुमंगल खानी ॥ ७ ॥
दसरथ गुन गन बरनि न जाहीं । अधिकु कहा जेहि सम जग नाहीं ॥ ८ ॥

bhūpa bhagīratha surasari ānī. sumirata sakala sumaṅgala khānī. 7.
dasaratha guna gana barani na jāhīm. adhiku kahā jēhi sama jaga nāhīm. 8.

[The sage now cites two instances of how a great person's fame and glories become eternal, and cannot be erased over time. The first is that of king Bhagirath, and the other is that of king Dasrath.]

King Bhagirath had done severe austerities to bring river Ganges, known as the 'river of gods', to earth from the heavens¹, and this single deed of his was so glorious and auspicious that it has been irrevocably linked to the holiness of river Ganges so much so that both (i.e. king Bhagirath and river Ganges) are equally honoured and respected in the world. (7)

Similarly, the glories and fame that king Dasrath had acquired are legendary and so extensive that it would suffice to say that there has never been and would never be anyone as great as him². (8)

[Note—¹The story of how river Ganges was brought to earth from the heavens has been narrated by sage Vishwamitra while he and the two brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman, were going to Janakpur to attend the bow-breaking ceremony there. See: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 212, and its accompanying note.

²The greatness of king Dasrath has been lavishly praised by sage Vasistha in Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 294; and (b) Ayodhya Kand, (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 172—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 174.]

दो०. जासु सनेह सकोच बस राम प्रगट भए आइ ।

जे हर हिय नयननि कबहुँ निरखे नहीं अघाइ ॥ २०९ ॥

dōhā.

jāsu sanēha sakōca basa rāma pragaṭa bha'e ā'i.
jē hara hiya nayanani kabahum' nirakhē nahīm aghā'i. 209.

[Glorifying king Dasrath, sage Bharadwaj gives his reason for it when he says—]

‘His (i.e. king Dasrath’s) love and affection for Lord Ram (the Supreme Being) was so deep, profound and sincere that the Lord, whose divine form is so magnificent, splendid, charming and mesmerizing that even though Lord Shiva constantly meditates on it in his heart yet he never feels contented with it—the same Lord was obliged to reveal himself in a physical form in this world as the king’s son in deference of the latter’s wishes so that the king could see him closely and derive immense bliss from this viewing¹.’ (Doha no. 209)

[Note—¹Lord Shiva constantly meditates on the divine form of Lord Ram and remains immersed in bliss derived from it so much so that he loses awareness of his surroundings. Whenever Lord Shiva sees Lord Ram, he is thrilled and never has enough of his beloved Lord’s sight—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 50; (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 82; (iii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 108; (iv) Doha no. 111 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it; and (v) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 146.

In his previous birth as king Manu, Dasrath had prayed to Lord Vishnu that he wants to see his physical form with his eyes. When the Lord obliged him by revealing his divine form, Manu was so wonderstruck that first he kept on gazing at the Lord, and then decided that he would ask the Lord to become his son so that the king could enjoy the Lord’s company very intimately. This is narrated in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 146—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 150.

Sage Vasistha too had cited this privilege of king Dasrath, that he was able to enjoy bliss that comes with viewing the divine form of Lord Ram, while praising the king—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 173 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede it.

The divine beauty of Lord Ram’s physical form has been described at many places in the story. Some instances are the following: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 215—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 216 (king Janak); (ii) Doha no. 219 along with Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precede it; (iii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 220—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 221 (citizens of Janakpur); (iv) Doha no. 233 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it; (v) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 242—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 244 (at the venue of the bow-breaking ceremony at Janakpur).]

चौ०. कीरति बिधु तुम्ह कीन्ह अनूपा । जहँ बस राम पेम मृगरूपा ॥ १ ॥

तात गलानि करहु जियँ जाँँ । डरहु दरिद्रहि पारसु पाँँ ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kīrati bidhu tumha kīnha anūpā. jaham̐ basa rāma pēma mṛgarūpā. 1.
tāta galāni karahu jiyam̐ jā'ēm̐. ḍarahu daridrahi pārasu pā'ēm̐. 2.

Sage Bharadwaj continued to assuage Bharat's hurt feelings and comfort him by saying: 'You have established your immaculate credentials and created a peerless moon symbolizing your excellent virtues and character. This moon has an image of a deer representing love and affection for Lord Ram embedded on its surface¹. (1)

Hence, my dear (tāta), do not regret so much. Why would someone fear poverty if he has the magical charm known as the 'philosopher's stone' (pāras) in his possession?

[This stone has the mystical ability to convert any metal into gold. So therefore, if one possesses it, there is no reason why he should worry about poverty and material wants. Since you have the panacea of all happiness and joy with you in the form of the grand virtue of love and devotion for Lord Ram, there is no reason why you should worry for anything or feel so regretful. You are very privileged and blessed like no one else is, so abandon such a remorseful mood and cheer up.]² (2)

[Note—¹The full disc of the moon seems to depict an image of a deer on its surface as viewed from earth. In other cultures, the shape formed by the shadows and depressions on the moon's surface is regarded as the face of a mythical man. In Indian culture this shape is regarded as the face of a deer because this animal's face and eyes have been traditionally linked to beauty, and since the moon is often regarded as a symbol of beauty and charm, the imagery fits in perfectly.

Even as this image of the deer is visible from as afar as the earth, and it is a permanent feature of the moon's face, likewise the glories of Bharat incorporating his exemplary love, affection and devotion for Lord Ram will be known even in the remotest corners of the world, and it would form an inseparable part of Bharat's identity, name and fame.

²In this metaphor, the mystical powers inherent in the virtue of having love and devotion for Lord Ram is likened to the philosopher's stone because a devotee of Lord Ram suffers from nothing, for the Lord himself takes care of him*1. Further, this virtue can neutralize the negative effects of any kind of sin*2. Sage Bharadwaj has already stated these two facts in the foregoing verses as follows:

*1Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 208.

*2Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 209.]

सुनुहु भरत हम झूठ न कहहीं । उदासीन तापस बन रहहीं ॥ ३ ॥

सब साधन कर सुफल सुहावा । लखन राम सिय दरसन पावा ॥ ४ ॥

sunahu bharata hama jhūṭha na kahahīm. udāsīna tāpasa bana rahahīm. 3.
saba sādhana kara suphala suhāvā. lakhana rāma siya darasanu pāvā. 4.

[In order to dispel doubts in the mind of Bharat and others that the sage was being too liberal and extravagant in heaping praises on Bharat, Bharadwaj said—]

Listen Bharat, I do not speak a lie; I live a life of a recluse who has renounced all attachments with the world, and I do Tapa (practice austerities and do penances).

[Hence, I need not please anyone by saying false things just to keep someone in good humour. I don't speak in vain, nor do I exaggerate things even a wee whit. But the truth needs to be told.] (3)

The best reward of all the religious and spiritual practices that I have done is that I have had the good fortune of seeing Laxman¹, Lord Ram and Sita. (4)

[Note—¹It is to be remarked here that sage Bharadwaj has mentioned Laxman first. It is because Laxman, like Bharat, exemplified love, affection and devotion for Lord Ram, and since the sage has laid stress on these virtues as the grandest of them all, he remembers Laxman first as a means of paying his homage to one of Lord Ram's greatest devotees.

Earlier, Bharat has himself praised Laxman in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 182; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 200.

Sage Bharadwaj had felt extremely exhilarated, thrilled and blessed when he met Lord Ram earlier. The sage had praised his own good luck, saying that it was a reward that marks the culmination of all his meritorious deeds, religious practices, austerities and penances—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 106 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 107.]

तेहि फल कर फलु दरस तुम्हारा । सहित पयाग सुभाग हमारा ॥ ५ ॥

भरत धन्य तुम्ह जसु जगु जयऊ । कहि अस पेम मगन मुनि भयऊ ॥ ६ ॥

tēhi phala kara phalu darasa tumhārā. sahita payāga subhāga hamārā. 5.
bharata dhan'ya tumha jasu jagu jaya'ū. kahi asa pēma magana muni
bhaya'ū. 6.

And the great reward of having the good fortune to see Lord Ram, Laxman and Sita (as mentioned in verse no. 4 herein above) is the blessed opportunity to meet you, which we, me and the rest of inhabitants of this holy pilgrimage place known as Prayag, have been fortunate enough to get, which indeed and in all sooth hath made us all feel that it is our greatest of luck and best of good fortunes. (5)

Oh Bharat! Thou art worthy of heartiest congratulations, and indeed thou deserve it and it is no exaggeration, for thou art the most blessed of souls as thine glories and merits have become famous in the world, making thee and thine reputation unmatched in all the quarters of world.'

Praising Bharat thus in the most laudatory of terms, sage Bharadwaj was overcome with such great emotions of love and affections for him that he (the sage) appeared to be in a trance-like state.

[To wit, the sage felt very thrilled and exhilarated beyond measure so much so that he was not able to say a word more, his eyes were filled with tears, and his heart, overwhelmed with love and affection for Bharat, blessed the latter profusely, albeit silently.] (6)

सुनि मुनि बचन सभासद हरषे । साधु सराहि सुमन सुर बरषे ॥ ७ ॥
 धन्य धन्य धुनि गगन पयागा । सुनि सुनि भरतु मगन अनुरागा ॥ ८ ॥

sunī muni bacana sabhāsada haraṣē. sādhu sarāhi sumana sura baraṣē. 7.
 dhan'ya dhan'ya dhuni gagana payāgā. suni suni bharatu magana anurāgā. 8.

When those who had assembled around sage Bharadwaj and Bharat heard these words of the sage, praising Bharat lavishly, all of them felt glad and exhilarated themselves too.

These saintly souls praised the excellent virtues of Bharat even as the gods showered flowers from the sky to show their own happiness.*

[*This verse can also be read as follows: “Hearing the words of the sage praising Bharat lavishly, those present in the assembly hailed him and joined in the applause for Bharat, saying that he was indeed a saintly soul worthy of such honour. The gods too joined in showing their pleasure by showering flowers from the heaven.”]¹ (7)

There was an all round applause for Bharat; everyone cheered, hailed and praised him so much to that the whole place, the sky and the land of Prayag, reverberated with it.

Hearing himself being thus praised and honoured so much, Bharat felt overwhelmed with emotions of gratitude and thanksgiving. (8)

[Note—¹Sage Bharadwaj was a very senior sage of his time. When he praised Bharat and honoured him, all those who were present there cheered at Bharat, hailing his virtues and glories. They applauded him and proclaimed unambiguously that Bharat was indeed a saintly soul and the most honourable because he has been praised so highly by an exalted sage of Bharadwaj's stature, which was indeed a rare honour.]

दो०. पुलक गात हियँ रामु सिय सजल सरोरुह नैन ।
 करि प्रनामु मुनि मंडलिहि बोले गदगद बैन ॥ २१० ॥
 dōhā.

pulaka gāta hiyaṁ rāmu siya sajala sarōruha naina.
 kari pranāmu muni maṇḍalihi bōlē gadagada baina. 210.

Bharat's body was thrilled, he remembered Lord Ram and Sita in his heart, and his eyes welled up with tears as he reverentially bowed before the assembly and began to speak with a voice that was choked with emotions. (Doha no. 210)

चौ०. मुनि समाजु अरु तीरथराजू । साँचिहुँ सपथ अघाइ अकाजू ॥ १ ॥
 एहिं थल जौं किछु कहिअ बनाई । एहि सम अधिक न अघ अधमाई ॥ २ ॥
 caupāī.

muni samāju aru tīratharājū. sām̐cihum̐ sapatha aghā'i akājū. 1.
ēhiṁ thala jaum̐ kichu kahi'a banā'ī. ēhi sama adhika na agha adhamā'ī. 2.

Bharat addressed the assembly with utmost humility thus: 'This is an assembly of illustrious sages, and we are at a holy place that is so exalted that it is honoured with the title of being "a king amongst all the pilgrim places (tīratharājū)".

In such an august assembly, to say something on oath (to prove that one is not speaking a lie) will be tantamount to causing an insult to it. (1)

In this situation, if one were to speak a lie by saying something other than the truth or a fact just because it would suit one's purpose, surely then there wouldst be no other greater sin as well as violation and travesty of the principles of ethical conduct, of probity and propriety, than doing so.¹ (2)

[Note—¹Bharat's opening statement intends to stress that what he is going to say is the truth, and nothing but the truth. He would say nothing to boast about his good character, or to say how good and honourable he is, or what good and meritorious things he had done, but it would be an honourable expression of the sincerest and the most frank of the inner most feelings of his heart, without any deceit and conceit on his part.]

तुम्ह सबग्य कहउँ सतिभाऊ । उर अंतरजामी रघुराऊ ॥ ३ ॥

मोहि न मातु करतब कर सोचू । नहिं दुखु जियँ जगु जानिहि पोचू ॥ ४ ॥

tumha sarbagya kaha'um̐ satibhā'ū. ura antarajāmī raghurā'ū. 3.
mōhi na mātu karataba kara sōcū. nahim̐ dukhu jiyam̐ jagu jānihi pōcū. 4.

I tell the truth that thou art all (such as the sages Bharadwaj and Vasistha especially, and all other local sages who had assembled there) all-knowing, and further, Lord Ram (the Lord of the Raghus; "raghurā'ū") too is aware of the inner feelings and thoughts of everyone ("antarajāmī"; being the one who lives inside the heart of all living beings as their Atma, their soul, their pure consciousness)¹.

[Therefore, it is impossible for me to get away by saying lies and being pretentious, for I can never fool any one of you by acting smart. Hence, whatever I wish to say is from the bottom of my heart, and it is nothing but the truth.] (3)

[That said, now let me make my submission as follows—] I am not much troubled about the (wicked) actions of mine mother, nor am I sorry that the world wouldst call me wicked and crooked².

[It is because I expect this sort of view about me from the world after what my mother has done, and I can't find nor do have any lame excuses for her evil deeds.] (4)

[Note—¹This fact, that Lord Ram knows the inner thoughts and feelings of everyone (antarajāmī), has been reiterated in numerous places in Ram Charit Manas. Some instances are the following:

Ram Charit Manas, (a) Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 66 (Laxman); (ii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 72; (iii) Doha

no. 201 (Nishad to Bharat); (iv) Doha no. 256; (v) Doha no. 257; (vi) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 266; (vii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 267; (viii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 298; (b) Aranya Kand, (ix) Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 6 (sage Atri); (x) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 9 (all the sages when Lord Ram asked them about the heap of bones he saw along the road to the forest); (xi) Chaupai line no. 19 that precedes Doha no. 11 (sage Sutikshan); (xii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 39 (Lord Shiva to Uma, his consort); (xiii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 42; (c) Sundar Kand, (xiv) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 49 (Vibhishan); (d) Uttar Kand, (xv) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 36 (Lord Ram knows the inner thoughts of all living being).

²A similar sense of self-reproach has been expressed by Bharat earlier in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 182.]

नाहिन डरु बिगरिहि परलोकू । पितहु मरन कर मोहि न सोकू ॥ ५ ॥
सुकृत सुजस भरि भुअन सुहाए । लछिमन राम सरिस सुत पाए ॥ ६ ॥

nāhina ḍaru bigarihi paralōkū. pitahu marana kara mōhi na sōkū. 5.
sukṛta sujasa bhari bhu'ana suhā'ē. lachimana rāma sarisa suta pā'ē. 6.

I am not afraid that my fate has been ruined, and I may end up doomed in my afterlife. Neither am I sorry for the death of mine father. (5)

He (my father, king Dasrath) had led a meritorious life, had acquired immense good fame and reputation, and had established his name in all the realms of the world—for his glories cannot be sufficiently praised as he has begotten sons in the likeness of Laxman and Lord Ram.¹ (6)

[Note—¹In this context, refer to what sage Vasistha had told Bharat in the court of Ayodhya as narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 171—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 172; (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 173—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 174.

Perhaps Bharat now wishes to tell sage Vasistha in particular, and the rest of the sages in general, that he knows well enough everything they might wish to tell him in the context of the developments back home in Ayodhya, and his decision to go to the forest to plead with Lord Ram to forgive him and return home—such as trying to persuade him to return to Ayodhya and assume the role of a king while Lord Ram is away from the place. But it would be a futile exercise for them to attempt it, and he expects them to please refrain from doing so.]

राम बिरहँ तजि तनु छनभंगू । भूप सोच कर कवन प्रसंगू ॥ ७ ॥
राम लखन सिय बिनु पग पनहीं । करि मुनि बेष फिरहि बन बनहीं ॥ ८ ॥

rāma biraham³ taji tanu chanabhaṅgū. bhūpa sōca kara kavana prasaṅgū. 7.
rāma lakhana siya binu paga panahīm. kari muni bēṣa phirahīm bana
banahīm. 8.

Verily, he (king Dasrath; his soul) hast left his gross mortal body, which is nevertheless inherently fragile and temporary for no one can be certain in which moment it would perish (tanu chanabhaṅgū), in grief of separation from Lord Ram¹. So therefore, where is the cause for one grieving for the king² (because he has died a noble death, and what a better way to die than to remember Lord Ram during one's last moments)³? (7)

The only regret that I have, and the only thing that troubles and torments me endlessly, is that Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman are walking barefoot in the forest, attired like a hermit⁴. (8)

[Note—¹According to the philosophy of the Upanishads, especially ones devoted to the divinity of Lord Ram (viz. Ram Tapini, Ram Rahasya etc.), the Lord is known as the 'Parmatma', the Supreme Atma, the Supreme Consciousness, the cosmic Soul. The 'true self' of a living being, on the other hand, is not his gross mortal body but his Atma, his soul, which is a microcosmic form of the macrocosmic Atma. To wit, it is the same 'Consciousness' that exists at two planes—i.e. the macrocosmic plane at the level of the Parmatma, and the microcosmic plane at the level of the individual living being known as the Jiva.

From the perspective of metaphysics, once the Atma is separated from the gross body of a creature, the latter is as good as dead. This basic philosophy has been invoked here when it is said that it is natural for king Dasrath to have died when Lord Ram, representing his 'Atma', had left the king's gross body by going away from him to the forest. What a wonderful imagery of metaphysics and spiritualism has been used here by Bharat while saying that his father's death is not to be grieved for.

²Sage Vasistha too has said so in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 171; (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 172; (iii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 173—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 174.

³In this context, refer to what Jatau and Baali have said at the time of their death—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Aranya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 31 (Jatau); (b) Kishkindha Kand, (ii) Chaupai line nos. 2-5 and Chanda line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 10 (Baali).

⁴Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 182; (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 188; and (iii) Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precede Doha no. 203.]

दो०. अजिन बसन फल असन महि सयन डसि कुस पात ।
बसि तरु तर नित सहत हिम आतप बरषा बात ॥ २११ ॥

dōhā.

ajina basana phala asana mahi sayana ḍāsi kusa pāta.
basi taru tara nita sahata hima ātapa baraṣā bāta. 211.

They (i.e. Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman) wear clothes made from the bark of trees and leaves, or wrap deer-skin around their bodies (ajina basana)¹, they survive by eating fruits, sleeping on the ground on a rough spread made of leaves and twigs, and taking shelter under the shade of trees, in all seasons, coping with the vagaries of Nature such as cold and frost of winter, heat of summer, rains during the rainy season, and storms and squalls whenever they occur². [Indeed, the mere thinking of these sufferings and hardships that the Lord and his two companions are enduring in the forest sends shivers down my spine and chills me. I have no words to express the horrors I mentally face when such thoughts come haunting my mind, which however are so frequent that I can't rest in peace even for a while like some ghost constantly tormenting me—refer verse no. 1 that follows herein below.]³ (Doha no. 211)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 165.

²Lord Ram had warned Sita about such a life in the forest—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 62 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede it.

³Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6, 8 that precede Doha no. 182.]

चौ०. एहि दुख दाहँ दहइ दिन छाती । भूख न बासर नीद न राती ॥ १ ॥
एहि कुरोग कर औषधु नाही । सोधेउँ सकल बिस्व मन माहीं ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

ēhi dukha dāham'ḍaha'i dina chātī. bhūkha na bāsara nīda na rātī. 1.
ēhi kurōga kara auṣadhu nāhīm. sōdhē'um'sakala bisva mana māhīm. 2.

This (i.e. Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman suffering hardships in the forest) is causing intense torment to me; it has robbed me of my peace, and it has been burning my heart every day with extreme agony, so much so that I have lost all desire to eat anything during the day and sleep during the night. (1)

It is an agonizing disease which has no remedy anywhere, for I have mentally examined if there was any way or possibility to ameliorate my grief and pain in this respect, but all was in vain¹. (2)

[Note—¹“To wit, my sufferings are caused by the interminable thoughts of Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman undergoing so much hardships due to me, as it was in my name that my wicked mother had banished them to the forest. It is not an ordinary disease for which any remedy can be found so easily, for as long as the cause persists the disease would not go away. And what is the ‘cause’ of this disease that has afflicted me and causing me intense pain, and how can it be ‘remedied’? It is that my beloved Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman are being made to suffer due to me, which is the ‘cause’, and the only ‘remedy’ that would work is when they come back home.”

In this context, refer to verse no. 6 herein below.]

मातु कुमत बढई अघ मूला । तेहिं हमार हित कीन्ह बँसूला ॥ ३ ॥
 कलि कुकाठ कर कीन्ह कुजंत्रू । गाड़ि अवधि पढ़ि कठिन कुमंत्रू ॥ ४ ॥
 मोहि लागि यहु कुठाटु तेहिं ठाटा । घालेसि सब जगु बारहबाटा ॥ ५ ॥

mātu kumata baṛha'ī agha mūlā. tēhiṁ hamāra hita kīnha bamśūlā. 3.
 kali kukāṭha kara kīnha kujantrū. gāṛi avadhi paṛhi kaṭhina kumantrū. 4.
 mōhi lagi yahu kuṭhāṭu tēhiṁ ṭhāṭā. ghālēsī saba jagu bārahabāṭā. 5.

[In the following verses, Bharat lambastes his mother Kaikeyi by using the metaphor of a wicked carpenter who makes a wooden contrivance, out of some jealousy, misplaced priorities or some misconceptions of what is good and what is bad, to cast a spell of black magic upon the person who is supposed to be the carpenter's patron, as the foul designs and the mischief created by Kaikeyi in the belief that she is planning something good for Bharat, would, on the contrary, make him infamous in the world and suffer interminably.]

My mother's (i.e. Kaikeyi's) evil and selfish thoughts (mātu kumata) are like a wicked and sinful carpenter who is at the root of this disease (baṛha'ī agha mūlā), because it was she who had used the excuse of my welfare (tēhiṁ hamāra hita) as a tool which a carpenter uses to chip and cut wood with ("bamśūlā"; the adze) --- (3)

--- To cut and shape an evil contrivance (kujantrū) from the inauspicious wood symbolized by discord and turmoil she created in the family and the kingdom (kali kukāṭha), and then planted (gāṛi) this evil device to cast a spell of black magic (paṛhi kaṭhina kumantrū) that would be the cause of doom for me for the period ("avadhi"; of fourteen years of Lord Ram's banishment) that she demanded. (4)

Apparently she cooked up this evil design and did everything for my good (mōhi lagi yahu kuṭhāṭu tēhiṁ ṭhāṭā), but in the bargain she hast eternally defamed me, destroyed my reputation, and brought nothing but ruin for me in the world for all times to come (ghālēsī saba jagu bārahabāṭā). (5)

मिटइ कुजोगु राम फिरि आएँ । बसइ अवध नहिं आन उपाएँ ॥ ६ ॥
 भरत बचन सुनि मुनि सुखु पाई । सबहिं कीन्हि बहु भाँति बड़ाई ॥ ७ ॥
 तात करहु जनि सोचु बिसेषी । सब दुखु मिटिहि राम पग देखी ॥ ८ ॥

miṭa'i kujōgu rāma phiri ā'ēm̃. basa'i avadha nahim āna upā'ēm̃. 6.
 bharata bacana suni muni sukhu pā'ī. sabahim kīnhi bahu bhām̃ti baṛā'ī. 7.
 tāta karahu jani sōcu bisēṣī. saba dukhu miṭihi rāma paga dēkhī. 8.

This misfortune and evil spell leading to my disease (i.e. my interminable pain, agony, torments and sufferings) can only end when Lord Ram returns home and stays

in Ayodhya—for truly, there is no other way or means to end this evil spell; there is no other remedy for my disease¹.’ (6)

Hearing the words of Bharat, the sage (Bharadwaj) felt very glad. All others who were present on the occasion too praised Bharat (for his excellent character, virtuous nature, sense of righteousness, propriety, probity and morality, his sincerity, honesty, piety and purity of heart, his clear conscience, devotion for Lord Ram, politeness, simplicity, humility, and other such glorious virtues that were indeed laudable) in lavish terms, and in a variety of ways². (7)

Everyone was unanimous in their view when they assured Bharat thus: ‘Dear (tāta), do not regret and lament so much, for all the grief and sorrows from which thou art suffering would be dispelled when thou wouldst be able to see the august feet of Lord Ram once again.’³ (8)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 178 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-3, 6-7 that precede it; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 3, 5-6 that precede Doha no. 179; (iii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 180—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 183.

²It was a large gathering. Everyone listened to what Bharat had to say in rapt attention. When he concluded his submission, everyone praised him in his own way—i.e. “in a variety of ways”.

A similar thing had happened in Ayodhya when Bharat declared his intention to go to the forest to bring Lord Ram back home—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 184—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 185.

³Bharat felt extremely happy and contented to hear the assembly of holy men thus blessing him, for it obviously meant that he would ‘see Lord Ram again’, as this was what he wanted.]

दो०. करि प्रबोधु मुनिबर कहेउ अतिथि पेमप्रिय होहु ।

कंद मूल फल फूल हम देहिं लेहु करि छोहु ॥ २१२ ॥

dōhā.

kari prabōdhu munibara kahē'u atithi pēmapriya hōhu.

kanda mūla phala phūla hama dēhim lēhu kari chōhu. 212.

Assuring Bharat that his wishes would surely be fulfilled, the exalted sage (Bharadwaj) said: ‘My dear, thou art my honoured guest whom I love very much. Please accept my affectionate gestures by cheerfully partaking of some refreshments in the form of edible roots and stems, as well as fruits and flowers that we have to offer thee (hama dēhim)¹, as it wouldst make all of us happy.’² (Doha no. 212)

[Note—¹The word “hama”, meaning ‘we’, is plural for ‘I’. Here, it has a dual meaning though. It can mean that the sage was referring to himself as well as all those present in his hermitage who were jointly honouring Bharat and offering refreshments

to him. It can also mean ‘I’, i.e. sage Bharadwaj, because it is used as part of courtly language by kings and other senior persons of position, as well as those who are guardians of others much junior to them, such as sages who maintained hermitages, when they offer some gift to a guest. They would normally say to the guest: ‘please accept the gift that is being offered to you by ‘hama’—obviously, the intent is ‘me’ and not ‘we’ here. But since the king or the senior sage who heads a hermitage is a representative of others, the use of the plural word “we; hama ” is also not out of place.

²Earlier, sage Bharadwaj had offered similar refreshments to Lord Ram while welcoming him: refer—Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 107.

But in the case of Bharat, it seems that the sage was trying to test the truth of his statement that “he has lost his taste and appetite”—apropos: Chaupai line no. 1 that follows Doha no. 211 herein above.

Bharat passed this test, as we shall discover in the verses that follow herein below. Initially he was reluctant and in a dilemma as to what to do when sage Bharadwaj offered food by way of refreshment to him, wondering whether to accept it or decline it; but then Bharat decided that he ought to honour the great sage’s request, for otherwise it would be tantamount to insulting him—apropos: Chaupai line nos. 1-3 herein below, that follow this Doha no. 212.

A little while later, we shall read that Bharadwaj put Bharat to another ‘test’ to see how steadfast he was in upholding his vows of austerity and penance as a means of repentance and atonement for the evil deeds done by his mother. What was this ‘test’, and how do we conclude that Bharadwaj was ‘testing’ Bharat? Well, the sage used his immense mystical powers to create a fairy-tale-like fascinating camp-city of wonderful dwellings that were provided with the best of material comforts and other pompous accouterments to entertain Bharat and his party, with all the pomp and show Bharat would have enjoyed had he accepted the offer of the crown of the mighty and prosperous kingdom of Ayodhya—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 213—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 215.

That said, how do we know sage Bharadwaj was ‘testing’ Bharat? Well, Doha no. 215 is explicit in this, for it says that sage Bharadwaj was “playing a game with Bharat by creating this fantastic camp with all sorts of things for physical pleasure and comfort”. It simply means that the magical fairy-tale-like camp that Bharadwaj created for Bharat was to see if the latter falls in the trap and regrets his decision to go to the forest instead of ascending the throne and enjoying life of a king.]

चौ०. सुनि मुनि बचन भरत हियँ सोचू । भयउ कुअवसर कठिन सँकोचू ॥ १ ॥

जानि गरुड़ गुर गिरा बहोरी । चरन बंदि बोले कर जोरी ॥ २ ॥

सिर धरि आयसु करिअ तुम्हारा । परम धरम यहु नाथ हमारा ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

sunī muni bacana bharata hiyaṁ sōcū. bhaya'u ku'avasara kaṭhina saṁkōcū.

1.

jāni garu'i gura girā bahōrī. carana bandi bōlē kara jōrī. 2.

sira dhari āyasu kari'a tumhārā. parama dharama yahu nātha hamārā. 3.

When Bharat heard the words of sage Bharadwaj (whereby the sage requested him to accept some eatables that he offers him by way of light refreshment), his heart was in a state of quandary, not being able to decide quickly what to do, for it was a difficult situation for him¹. (1)

But then there were other things to be considered too: it was necessary to obey the words of a guru (a senior teacher)².

Weighing the pros and cons in his heart, Bharat concluded that he must accept the sage's request. So he offered his obeisance at the august feet of the sage, joined the palms of his hand in reverence, and said most politely, --- (2)

'I shalt obey thine orders by bowing my head, as it is my paramount duty, my Lord, to obey thee.'³ (3)

[Note—¹What difficulty did Bharat face? Well, refer to the note appended to Doha no. 212 herein above. Just a while ago he had publicly declared that due to the grief and agony, as well as the immensity of the sense of guilt and regrets associated with the misfortune of Lord Ram being sent to the forest on his account, he has lost all his appetite—apropos: Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 212. And now if he eats, it would mean he was lying.

Besides, to be frank and honest, it cannot be denied that Bharat was hungry, and it is easy for a distraught man under great emotional stress to not think of food as long as he does not have a chance to eat it or even see it, but if a delicious dish is placed before him it is but natural that his appetite would be stoked with a vengeance, and he would find it impossible to restrain himself any more from gobbling the delicacy as fast as he can gulp it down his throat, for the stomach would start grumbling and croaking due to excessive hunger at the first sight of food. Should this happen, Bharat was thinking, he would be ridiculing himself.

²The word used here is 'guru'. Now, Bharat's guru was sage Vasistha, and not Bharadwaj, and the offer to accept eatables was made by the latter. So what is the import of this verse? It implies that all senior sages were treated equally in ancient times, so sage Bharadwaj was shown as much respect by Bharat as he would have shown it to sage Vasistha, his real family guru.

³Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 188. Here we learn that not only Bharat but everyone else too had taken a vow of austerity, deciding to eat 'once a day' and surviving on milk and water, as they proceeded to the forest to meet Lord Ram.

Bharat thought over the matter and concluded that this opened a window for finding a way out of the difficult situation—viz. he and others could eat 'once a day', and so it would be alright if he accepted sage Bharadwaj's food as long as he does not eat for the rest of the day again.

We have another instance when one is obliged to obey the orders of one's senior even though it seems not right to do so—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 77. Here, Lord Shiva agrees to obey Lord Ram when the latter requests the former to marry Parvati, albeit it was not proper for

him to do so, for he was an ascetic who had renounced all sorts of attachments and getting involved in family ties.

A very interesting and pertinent observation is to be made here. We have read that earlier Bharat had flatly defied his guru, sage Vasistha, when he refused to accept the repeated request of the sage to accept the crown—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 174—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 176 (sage Vasistha's request); (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 177; (iii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 182—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 183 (Bharat's refusal).

So, what's the difference between the two situations—one of refusing to obey sage Vasistha, and the other of not disobeying sage Bharadwaj? Well, the answer is very simple and straight, and it is found in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 185. It says: "Let anything that stands in the way of one coming close to Lord get burnt and reduced to ashes".

Now, in the case of sage Vasistha, his proposal meant that Bharat would have to accept the throne and by default be opposed to Lord Ram, as the throne actually belonged to the Lord. Further, it meant that he would not be going to the forest to meet Lord Ram, beg to be forgiven for all the mischief done by his mother in his name, and bring the Lord back home. Hence, sage Vasistha's proposal was not acceptable—because by accepting it Bharat would be prevented from meeting Lord Ram soon.

On the other hand, sage Bharadwaj's proposal had nothing of the sort; it was merely an offer of food, which nevertheless was eaten by everyone for survival. So, accepting Bharadwaj's request would in no way stand in the way of Bharat's quest for having a meeting Lord Ram, which was the case with sage Vasistha's request.]

भरत बचन मुनिबर मन भाए । सुचि सेवक सिष निकट बोलाए ॥ ४ ॥
चाहिअ कीन्हि भरत पहुनाई । कंद मूल फल आनहु जाई ॥ ५ ॥
भलेहिं नाथ कहि तिन्ह सिर नाए । प्रमुदित निज निज काज सिधाए ॥ ६ ॥

bharata bacana munibara mana bhā'ē. suci sēvaka siṣa nikaṭa bōlā'ē. 4.
cāhi'a kīnhi bharata pahunā'ī. kanda mūla phala ānahu jā'ī. 5.
bhalēhiṁ nātha kahi tinha sira nā'ē. pramudita nija nija kāja sidhā'ē. 6.

Bharat's polite words made the sage's heart feel gladdened. The sage summoned his trusted followers (i.e. disciples and subordinates) and said, --- (4)

'I wish to entertain Bharat as he is my honoured guest by offering some refreshments to him. So, make haste and bring some edible roots and fruits for this purpose.' (5)

Bowing their heads in obedience, they replied, 'Alright sir, it shall be done forthwith', and then they went away cheerfully to fulfill their assignment. (6)

मुनिहि सोच पाहुन बड़ नेवता । तसि पूजा चाहिअ जस देवता ॥ ७ ॥
सुनि रिधि सिधि अनिमादिक आई । आयसु होइ सो करहिं गोसाई ॥ ८ ॥

munihi sōca pāhuna baṛa nēvatā. tasi pūjā cāhi'a jasa dēvatā. 7.
 suni ridhi sidhi animādika ā'īm. āyasu hō'i sō karahim gōsā'īm. 8.

Meanwhile, sage Bharadwaj became thoughtful, considering the fact that Bharat was not an ordinary guest, but someone distinguished who deserved special treatment that would be equivalent to his stature, and would be like the worship which one would offer to a revered god if the latter comes visiting him¹. (7)

So, the sage invoked certain supernatural powers that he had, called the 'Riddhi-Siddhi', represented by the two mystical deities, such as Anima and others², that can provide rich physical comfort and opulence of every kind in a magical way whenever demanded. (8)

[Note—¹Sage Bharadwaj became pensive; he wondered if simply offering ordinary food would suffice as a gesture of respect he would be expected to show Bharat, who was a very special guest—because he was the younger brother of Lord Ram, had immaculate character and excellent virtues, and was a de-facto king of the mighty kingdom of Ayodhya, at least for the time being.

Hence, the sage thought that Bharat deserves some special treatment behooving his stature.

When sage Bharadwaj had offered similar refreshments to Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman earlier, he had no regrets—why? It is because the Lord and his two companions were supposed to live like a hermit for the next fourteen years, and hermits are expected to eat only fruits and edible roots and stems etc. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 107.}

But we must remember that Bharat was not attired in a hermit's clothes at present; he wore simple clothes that's true, but surely not those worn by hermits—he was a prince, and his decision to go the forest was his own, and not imposed upon him by some mandate. Later on in the story however, we shall read that when Bharat returned to Ayodhya and decided to live in the same way as he had seen Lord Ram living in the forest, i.e. like a hermit, he had then changed his clothes and donned the attire of a hermit. But this happens much later. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 323; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 2-5 that precede Doha no. 324.}

²The Riddhis-Siddhis are mystical powers that can be invoked to produce an instant effect of richness, opulence, wealth and physical comfort, as they are able to provide everything one needs in physical terms. 'Anima' is the name of one such aspect of the Riddhis and Siddhis.

Remember that it was a hermitage, and not a palace of a king. Hence, the place was humble and austere, where the requirements and accouterments to entertain such a large entourage as that which accompanied Bharat were obviously not available. So, sage Bharadwaj, who had the mystical ability to invoke the powers of Riddhis and Siddhis, invited the deities representing these supernatural powers, to provide the necessary things to entertain Bharat and his party in accordance with the sage's wish to honour Bharat and his entourage in a noble way, and according to their stature.]

दो०. राम बिरह व्याकुल भरतु सानुज सहित समाज ।

पहुनाई करि हरहु श्रम कहा मुदित मुनिराज ॥ २१३ ॥

dōhā.

rāma biraha byākula bharatu sānuja sahita samāja.
pahunā'ī kari harahu śrama kahā mudita munirāja. 213.

When the Riddhi-Siddhi arrived, the sage told them: 'Bharat, along with his younger brother (Shatrughan) and the rest of the people who are accompanying him, are all tormented by grief due to separation from Lord Ram. They need comfort and rest.

So, I request you to take necessary action to ease their sufferings, and to ensure that they are well entertained and provided with full comfort.' (Doha no. 213)

चौ०. रिधि सिधि सिर धरि मुनिबर बानी । बड़भागिनि आपुहि अनुमानी ॥ १ ॥

कहहिं परसपर सिधि समुदाई । अतुलित अतिथि राम लघु भाई ॥ २ ॥

मुनि पद बंदि करिअ सोइ आजू । होइ सुखी सब राज समाजू ॥ ३ ॥

caupā'ī.

ridhi sidhi sira dhari munibara bānī. barābhāgini āpuhi anumānī. 1.
kahahim parasapara sidhi samudā'ī. atulita atithi rāma laghu bhā'ī. 2.
muni pada bandi kari'a sō'i ājū. hō'i sukhī saba rāja samājū. 3.

The twin deities known as 'Riddhi-Siddhi', who embodied the supernatural powers that could work miracles on the instructions of those who had mastered the mystical art to use them when needed (such as sage Bharadwaj presently), accepted the words (instruction, order, request) of sage Bharadwaj by bowing their heads before the exalted sage, and considered themselves very fortunate.

[Why did Riddh and Siddhi consider themselves very lucky? This is answered in the next verse.] (1)

All the supernatural powers under the command of the deity known as 'Siddhi' were excited and very happy as they talked amongst themselves thus: 'It is a rarest of rare honour and an incomparable privilege for us to be given a chance to serve the younger brothers of Lord Ram (i.e. Bharat and Shatrughan). (2)

Hence, let us first thank the sage by paying our obeisance at his august feet, and thence we shalt do everything possible so that the entire royal entourage (accompanying Bharat) wouldst be well provided for, and made very comfortable and happy.' (3)

अस कहि रचेउ रुचिर गृह नाना । जेहि बिलोकि बिलखाहिं बिमाना ॥ ४ ॥

भोग बिभूति भूरि भरि राखे । देखत जिन्हहि अमर अभिलाषे ॥ ५ ॥

दासीं दास साजु सब लीन्हें । जोगवत रहहिं मनहि मनु दीन्हें ॥ ६ ॥

asa kahi racē'u rucira gr̥ha nānā. jēhi bilōki bilakhāhim bimānā. 4.
bhōga bibhūti bhūri bhari rākhē. dēkhata jinhahi amara abhilāṣē. 5.

dāsīm dāsa sāju saba līnhēm. jōgavata rahahīm manahi manu dīnhēm. 6.

Saying so, the Riddhi-Siddhi proceeded forthwith to carry out the instructions of the sage and do the best that they can. They created (in a fleeting moment) a beautiful camp consisting of pleasant dwellings of different kinds, ones that were so charming and wonderful that the best of pavilions¹ (of the gods in heaven) would feel shy about their own beauty. (4)

These dwellings were fully equipped with the best of material comforts and abundant luxuries which would even the even gods (“amara”; the immortals) would envy and wish to have (abhilāṣē). (5)

There were male and female attendants who were standing ready with all possible things in hand that could be needed to serve the honourable guests, and they were very eager to fulfill all the desires of the guests no sooner they were made. (6)

[Note—¹The actual phrase used in the text is “bilakhāhīm bimānā”. Literally taken it would mean ‘wailed or lamented’ and ‘air planes’ respectively. But it is usual in classical texts to use certain words and phrases that mean something else than their dictionary meaning. Generally, the aerial vehicles used by gods are called ‘bimānā’, and they are imagined to be large pavilion-like planes; they are well decorated and well provided with all sorts of provisions.

Keeping aside the hyperbole and flowery language that is so typical of classical literature, the simple and straightforward idea here is that the temporary camp which the Riddhi-Siddhi erected to entertain Bharat and his party was very beautiful and well provided for, with all the accouterments that are needed for a comfortable stay and rest after a long and arduous journey. In modern terms we can visualize it as a beautiful ‘tent-city’ that would be erected by a host king when a large contingent of honourable and dignified guests arrives to pay a state visit to his kingdom.]

सब समाजु सजि सिधि पल माहीं । जे सुख सुरपुर सपनेहुँ नाहीं ॥ ७ ॥
प्रथमहिं बास दिए सब केही । सुंदर सुखद जथा रुचि जेही ॥ ८ ॥

saba samāju saji sidhi pala māhīm. jē sukha surapura sapanēhumṁ nāhīm. 7.
prathamahīm bāsa di'ē saba kēhī. sundara sukhada jathā ruci jēhī. 8.

Thus, Siddhi (with the help of her companion Riddhi) created every possible thing that would be needed for providing comfort and joy to the guests in a very short time of a few moments¹.

The camp so erected (or created) was so fascinating and wonderful in all respects that such a place cannot be imagined to exist in the heaven where the gods live, even in a dream. (7)

Every one of the guests was given a suitable accommodation according to their likings on the basis of ‘first come first served’. Each such dwelling was beautiful and well provided with². (8)

[Note—¹As has already been said, these two, the Riddhi and Siddhi, are deities who represent supernatural powers and mystical abilities to do anything wished for. Hence, it was not difficult for them to erect a beautiful temporary camp for Bharat and his entourage. It was a work of wonder, and created magically.]

²It means that everyone was given a comfortable place to stay. The term ‘first come first served’ does not mean that those who were provided accommodation first had the best of the place, while late comers or those behind in the queue had something lesser; every dwelling was the same, and none of the guests could say that their accommodation were not up to the mark.]

दो०. बहुरि सपरिजन भरत कहँ रिषि अस आयसु दीन्ह ।
बिधि बिसमय दायकु बिभव मुनिबर तपबल कीन्ह ॥ २१४ ॥

dōhā.

bahuri saparijana bharata kahum̐ riṣi asa āyasu dīnha.
bidhi bisamaya dāyaku bibhava munibara tapabala kīnha. 214.

After that, the sage (Bharadwaj) ordered that Bharat and his family be given a suitable accommodation¹.

The most fascinating, wonderful and awe-inspiring magical camp that the exalted sage Bharadwaj got erected to entertain Bharat, by the virtue of the mystical powers he had acquired as a result of doing Tapa (religious practices, such as observing austerities, doing penances etc.), left even the creator Brahma dazed in amazement². (Doha no. 214)

[Note—¹To wit, first the citizens were provided accommodation, and then Bharat and his family members were asked to step in the dwelling assigned for them. This was in accordance to protocol observed by great kings of the past who loved their subjects, because they put the welfare of their subjects before their own interests, treating happiness and comfort of the subjects on a priority basis. Hence, first all the members of the entourage that accompanied Bharat were given proper lodgings, and then only Bharat and his family members, such as his younger brother and mothers, along with their staff, were given suitable dwellings.]

Earlier too we have read that Bharat had overseen that everyone accompanying him in the procession has gone out first before he himself left Ayodhya for the forest, and during the journey itself, he would daily ensure that everyone was comfortable and well wherever the party pitched camp for the day in the evening, or proceeded for the journey ahead on the next day. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 187 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede it; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 198; (iii) Doha no. 202—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 203.}

²It is because the magnificence and opulence created by Riddhi and Siddhi were so extraordinary and out-worldly that Brahma could not believe his own eyes when he saw it, that such a beautiful place can actually be created. Remember that Brahma is the creator of this world, and he prides himself with his skills in craftsmanship. To some extent he is right too, for the wide variety of Nature and its magnificent beauty

that he has created, from the smallest component to the largest, is indeed mind-boggling and defies imagination. So, when Brahma saw this camp-city erected magically by Riddhi-Siddhi on the instructions of sage Bharadwaj, he was extremely fascinated and awe-struck, because he realized that he was not the only one who can work wonders in the field of creation, for there were other great sages who could surpass him in this field if they so wished.

A similar situation had arisen earlier too when the creator Brahma was dazed to see the beauty of the city of Janakpur, the home of Sita, for he was so astonished by its magnificence and charm that he felt it was not his own creation, as he felt that he was not competent enough to create such a wondrous place—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 314.]

चौ०. मुनि प्रभाउ जब भरत बिलोका । सब लघु लगे लोकपति लोका ॥ १ ॥
सुख समाजु नहिं जाइ बखानी । देखत बिरति बिसारहिं ग्यानी ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

muni prabhā'u jaba bharata bilōkā. saba laghu lagē lōkapati lōkā. 1.
sukha samāju nahim jā'i bakhānī. dēkhata birati bisārahim gyānī. 2.

When Bharat saw the magical effects of sage Bharadwaj's mystical powers, he was extremely amazed and concluded that whatever existed in this creation, including the magnificent abodes of the various custodians of the world, were all diminutive when compared to the extent of the magnificence, beauty and opulence of the camp that was created by the sage for him. (1)

The articles and accoutrements of material comfort and pleasure that were provided in abundance in this magnificent camp could not be described or listed, for they were such which would even entice the mind and heart of dispassionate souls (people) who have vowed to renounce the world, and keep away from its material charms and temptations, so much so that they too would be inclined to fall for the attractions of the camp and wish to enjoy them (forgetting for some time about their vows of renunciation, dispassion and detachment). (2)

आसन सयन सुबसन बिताना । बन बाटिका बिहग मृग नाना ॥ ३ ॥
सुरभि फूल फल अमिअ समाना । बिमल जलासय बिबिध बिधाना ॥ ४ ॥

āsana sayana subasana bitānā. bana bāṭikā bihaga mṛga nānā. 3.
surabhi phūla phala ami'a samānā. bimala jalāsaya bibidha bidhānā. 4.

[In the following verses, a brief outline is being given regarding the sort of things of comfort and pleasure that were made available in this magnificent camp.]

There were beautiful seats and beds to sit and sleep upon; magnificent clothes to wear; wonderful canopies and awnings to provide shade; there were forests (groves) and flowering gardens with abundance of birds and animals of different kinds. (3)

There were fragrant flowers and succulent fruits that were no nectarine in taste. Then there were clean ponds and other types of water bodies, of various shapes and sizes. (4)

असन पान सुचि अमिअ अमी से । देखि लोग सकुचात जमी से ॥ ५ ॥
सुर सुरभी सुरतरु सबही कें । लखि अभिलाषु सुरेस सची कें ॥ ६ ॥

asana pāna suci ami'a amī sē. dēkhi lōga sakucāta jamī sē. 5.
sura surabhī surataru sabahī kēm. lakhi abhilāṣu surēsa sacī kēm. 6.

There were so many delectable delicacies and viands of various kinds, both for the purpose of eating as well as for drinking, that their sight caused a lot of hesitation amongst the guests because they had taken a vow of austerity and self-control, but found it hard to resist the temptation to partake of such nectar-like food and drink. (5)

Every individual dwelling (where the guests were lodged) had a cow known as 'Surbhi' (the all wish-fulfilling cow of gods) as well as a tree known as 'Surtaru' (the all wish-fulfilling tree of gods), the sight of which made even the king of gods, Indra, and his consort, Sachi, feel envious, for they wished they too could have a dwelling which would have such a cow and a tree meant for their exclusive use. (6)

रितु बसंत बह त्रिबिध बयारी । सब कहँ सुलभ पदारथ चारी ॥ ७ ॥
स्रक चंदन बनितादिक भोगा । देखि हरष बिसमय बस लोगा ॥ ८ ॥

ritu basanta baha tribidha bayārī. saba kham' sulabha padāratha cārī. 7.
sraka candana banitādika bhōgā. dēkhi haraṣa bisamaya basa lōgā. 8.

The general ambience of the camp was pleasant as that of the spring season, with breeze that was soft, fragrant and cool (tribidha bayārī) blowing from all the directions.

Every imaginable thing was available; nay, even the much sought after mystical rewards known as Kaam (wish fulfillment), Artha (wealth and prosperity), Dharma (religious merit) and Moksha (emancipation and deliverance) could also be accessed easily in that camp.

[The idea is that the camp was so exceptionally pleasant and comfortable in all respects that nothing was left wanting. The camp was a place like the one where all desires of a creature are fulfilled if he ever got a lucky chance to live in it.] (7)

By observing the availability of abundance of fragrant garlands, sandalwood, damsels in attendance, and so many other things of pleasure and comfort that were present in that wondrous camp, all the guests were overcome with amazement. (8)

दो०. संपति चकई भरतु चक मुनि आयस खेलवार ।
तेहि निसि आश्रम पिंजराँ राखे भा भिनुसार ॥ २१५ ॥

dōhā.

sampati cakaī bharatu caka muni āyasa khēlavāra.
tēhi nisi āśrama pinjārām rākhē bhā bhinusāra. 215.

The wealth and opulence on display were like the female bird known as Chakvi, Bharat was like her male counterpart known as Chakva, and it appeared that the sage (Bharadwaj) was playing some game with them by keeping them trapped together in a cage during the night till the dawn of the next day. (Doha no. 215)

[Note—This Doha explicitly means that by creating this magical camp-city, with all its dream-like pleasures and material comforts, sage Bhardwaj was trying to test Bharat's character and his resolve to lead a life of austerity like that of a hermit as long as Lord Ram lives in a similar way in the forest. The sage threw a bait before Bharat to see if he is detracted from his path; if he regrets his decision to renounce the crown of Ayodhya, because if he accepted it then all such comforts and pleasures would come to him easily, as Ayodhya was a prosperous, wealthy, opulent and thriving kingdom.

Here the metaphor of the two birds Chakva and Chakvi being trapped in a cage for the night by sage Bharadwaj is used because normally they remain separated from each other during the night, and are united once again at daybreak. Compelling Bharat to spend the night in the lap of luxury was like forcing the male bird, the Chakva, to live in the company of its partner, the female Chakvi—to see if they fall into some kind of temptation. To wit, the sage wished to see if luxury would tempt Bharat, or if he would remain steadfast in his vows.]

[PAUSE 19 FOR A THIRTY-DAY RECITATION]

चौ०. कीन्ह निमज्जनु तीरथराजा । नाइ मुनिहि सिरु सहित समाजा ॥ १ ॥
रिषि आयसु असीस सिर राखी । करि दंडवत बिनय बहु भाषी ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

kīnha nimajjanu tīratharājā. nā'i munihi siru sahita samājā. 1.
riṣi āyasu asīsa sira rākhī. kari daṇḍavata binaya bahu bhāṣī. 2.

At the break of day the next morning, Bharat and his party refreshed themselves by taking a bath at the confluence of the three holy rivers (viz. Ganges, Yamuna and Saraswati) at the holy place which is regarded as being the king amongst pilgrim places (tīratharājā; “Prayag”).

Then, Bharat bowed his head before sage Bharadwaj together with all others in his entourage¹. (1)

Bharat accepted the sage's instructions and blessings by literally ‘placing the sage's words on his head’ (i.e. listening to what the sage had to say with a bowed head, and with full attention).

Then he prostrated before the sage and exchanged pleasantries with the latter in most polite terms. (2)

[Note—¹At the time Bharat went to pay his respects to sage Bharadwaj before taking his leave to move onwards on his journey, the sage keenly, and with piercing eyes, closely observed Bharat's attitude and demanours, to check if the comforts and pleasures of the previous night had in any way affected him. But seeing that no change was discernible in Bharat, and he was as sad and distraught as before, as well as very eager to go to Lord Ram and meet him at the earliest, the sage felt very glad and contented. This is why he blessed Bharat profusely, and offered all help he could for his successful journey onwards to Chitrakoot.]

पथ गति कुसल साथ सब लीन्हें । चले चित्रकूटहिं चितु दीन्हें ॥ ३ ॥
रामसखा कर दीन्हें लागू । चलत देह धरि जनु अनुरागू ॥ ४ ॥

patha gati kusala sātha saba līnhēm. calē citrakūṭahim citu dīnhēm. 3.
rāmasakhā kara dīnhēm lāgū. calata dēha dhari janu anurāgū. 4.

Bharat accepted whatever the sage offered him by way of guidance and advice, as well as the things (such as food) that would be needed for the long journey ahead.

Then, taking leave of the sage, Bharat departed from there with his mind focused on the objective of his journey, i.e. to head towards Chitrakoot¹. (3)

Bharat held the hand of the 'friend of Lord Ram', i.e. Guha Nishad, as he walked along the path as if he needed the latter's support to walk, because he was overwhelmed with emotions that had virtually sapped him of his energy, making it difficult for Bharat to walk alone without help². (4)

[Note—¹Sage Bharadwaj had been aware that Lord Ram stays at Chitrakoot. He was a great sage, and it is natural that information about important things would come to him from travellers and disciples who used to pay frequent visits to his hermitage during their journeys.

So, one of the things that sage Bharadwaj 'advised' Bharat was to proceed in the direction of Chitrakoot, and he also 'guided' Bharat about the general direction he must proceed on the path leading to that place so that he can reach it by the shortest route.

²We have read earlier too that very often Bharat had to take the support of Guha Nishad as he was too emotionally upset that he needed some help to walk properly, without stumbling and falling—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 198.

Another very interesting point to note at this juncture is this: We have read earlier that after leaving Bharadwaj's hermitage, Lord Ram had gone to sage Valmiki's place—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 124.

But in the case of Bharat, no mention is made that he also visited sage Valmiki. What do we conclude from this; why did he not go to meet Valmiki; what could possibly have been the reason for Bharat skipping Valmiki's place?

Well, the answer is this: Nishad had accompanied Lord Ram till the banks of river Yamuna, after leaving sage Bharadwaj's hermitage, and it was from here that the

Lord had sent him back before he moved on towards sage Valmiki's hermitage. This will be clear if we go back a little and read Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 111—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 112; and subsequently (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 124.

This obviously means that after river Yamuna, Nishad was unaware of the route taken by Lord Ram to the forest. Therefore, he was not even aware that the Lord had visited sage Valmiki, unlike the case of sage Bharadwaj where Nishad had been with Lord Ram when the Lord had paid a visit to the sage.

But then, sage Bharadwaj had told Bharat to proceed in the direction of Chitrakoot, as is evident from Chaupai line nos. 2-3 herein above. So, after crossing river Yamuna, Bharat had to ask locals and travellers he met about the route that would take him to Chitrakoot. This also means that even if he had been in the vicinity of sage Valmiki's hermitage during the course of his journey, Bharat was totally oblivious of it, and so naturally he skipped or skirted it. His main aim was to reach Lord Ram in Chitrakoot as soon as it was possible, his mind was focused on this goal, and so he did not pay much attention to hermitages or villages that lay en-route.]

नहिं पद त्रान सीस नहिं छाया । पेमु नेमु ब्रतु धरमु अमाया ॥ ५ ॥

लखन राम सिय पंथ कहानी । पूँछत सखहि कहत मृदु बानी ॥ ६ ॥

nahim pada trāna sīsa nahim chāyā. pēmu nēmu bratu dharamu amāyā. 5.
lakhana rāma siya pantha kahānī. pūṁchata sakhahi kahata mṛdu bānī. 6.

[The following verses narrate how Bharat was walking on the road to Chitrakoot.]

There was no footwear on Bharat's legs, and neither was an umbrella to provide shade over his head.

Verily indeed, in all sooth and without gainsay, his affection and love for Lord Ram, his vows of austerity and penance, his resolve to uphold the principles of Dharma (righteousness in thought and conduct) were true, honest and sincere, without any pretensions, deceit or conceit. (5)

While walking steadily ahead on the path, Bharat would keep himself engaged by asking his friend (Guha Nishad) to narrate some or the other stories (i.e. episodes) related to Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman that pertained to their journey to the forest, which Nishad cheerfully told him¹. (6)

[Note—¹Nishad was the only person who had accompanied Lord Ram on his outward journey to the forest for quite a long distance, right from Sringeripur to the banks of river Yamuna past sage Bharadwaj's hermitage. He had spent quite a lot of time with the Lord.

So, Bharat asked him to tell him some of the episodes he had witnessed and were related to the journey of the Lord. This dialogue helped them both, Bharat and Nishad, to break the monotony of the long journey, as well as to keep their minds occupied and diverted from the troubles and problems associated with walking barefoot on the forest path, with no umbrella to shade them from the sun, and of the uncertainty of the success of the whole exercise, something that constantly worried Bharat.]

राम बास थल बिटप बिलोकें । उर अनुराग रहत नहिं रोकेँ ॥ ७ ॥
देखि दसा सुर बरिसहिं फूला । भइ मृदु महि मगु मंगल मूला ॥ ८ ॥

rāma bāsa thala biṭapa bilōkēṁ. ura anurāga rahata nahim rōkēṁ. 7.
dēkhi dasā sura barisahim phulā. bha'i mṛdu mahi magu maṅgala mūlā. 8.

Whenever they came across some place where Lord Ram had stayed or rested for sometime, or some tree under whose shade the Lord had abided for a while before moving ahead¹, Bharat would become so overwhelmed with emotions, affections and sweet memories of the Lord that he would not be able to contain his feelings which would brim over and overflow from his heart. (7)

Seeing the condition of Bharat, the gods showered flowers from the heaven (as they too felt exhilarated by seeing Bharat's devotion and love for Lord Ram whom they all revered).

Verily indeed, all aspects of Nature wished to please Bharat and give him as much comfort as they could. Hence, the earth became soft, and the path became enjoyable as if it was an embodiment of all auspiciousness. (8)

[Note—¹How could Bharat and Nishad determine the place where Lord Ram might have spent some time on the road? No conclusive evidence is given about it, but we can reasonably guess that the place acquired a special halo of divinity and auspiciousness which would mark it out from its surroundings. This is not impossible, for even in practical world we come across some places which make us very uneasy and uncomfortable, and there are other places which are soothing for the nerves, heart and mind. If we meet a person who is pious, holy, religious, and devoted to god, we feel his positive energy radiate out and affect us in a constructive way, while when we are in the company of a villain his negative vibes make us feel agitated, and we wish we could move out at the earliest.

Further, it is also possible that locals, such as villagers and tribesmen living along the road, would make some kind of small and humble memorial in memory of their beloved Lord Ram, and Bharat found them.]

दो०. किँ जाहिँ छाया जलद सुखद बहइ बर बात ।
तस मगु भयउ न राम कहँ जस भा भरतहि जात ॥ २१६ ॥

dōhā.

ki'ēṁ jāhim chāyā jalada sukhada baha'i bara bāta.
tasa magu bhaya'u na rāma kham'jasa bhā bharatahi jāta. 216.

As Bharat traversed the path of the forest leading to Chitrakoot, the rain-bearing dark clouds provided shade over his head, and pleasant breeze blew over him.

Verily indeed and in all sooth, the journey of Lord Ram on the forest path was not as pleasant as that Bharat had encountered on his way.

[It is because all aspects of Nature went out of their way to provide comfort to Bharat, realizing that he was a great devotee of Lord Ram, and serving him well would make the Lord very happy and pleased.]¹ (Doha no. 216)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 113 where we read that the clouds had provided shade to Lord Ram too during his long journey to the forest. So, what is meant here is that though Mother Nature had done her bid to provide Lord Ram as much comfort as she could under the prevailing circumstances, but when it came to dealing with the case of Bharat she was extra careful and took special caution that nothing is left to chance, and nothing is left wanting, as far as providing comfort, and creating an environment that would make the passage of Bharat easy, is concerned. To wit, the passage of Bharat was more comfortable than that of Lord Ram.

One reason that may be the probable cause of it happening, besides the obvious fact that service done to a devotee is the best form of service that can be done to the Lord himself, is that Lord Ram was the Supreme Being himself, which means that he was immune to be affected by any physical discomfort. Even if Mother Nature and the Gods had not provided shade by way of clouds, or soften the ground underneath the Lord's feet by showering flowers as mentioned in Doha no. 113 of Ayodhya Kand, it would not have mattered to the Lord at all—because Lord Ram is unaffected by and immune to worldly comforts and sufferings (apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 12).

But Bharat's case was different, for he was a 'devotee of Lord Ram', and 'his brother' in this mortal world, but not the Supreme Being himself. Hence, special care was to be given to Bharat so that he did not suffer any kind of discomfort, because should it happen it would cause great annoyance to Lord Ram himself.

This verse has a great message for all of us. If we are on a path that leads us to Lord Ram, the Supreme Lord of the world, than all obstacles and problems would be taken care of, and even the most malignant of stars and cruel fate would think twice to create us trouble. Remember this: Lord Ram has himself declared that if someone offends him, the Lord would forgive the offender, but if his devotee is made to suffer, than it is an unpardonable sin. This unequivocal fact is explicitly stressed by the guru of the gods, i.e. sage Brihaspati, in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 218 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede it.

There is no wonder that it should happen that Mother Nature would go out of her way to please Bharat and see that he is not put to any undue discomfort because she is well aware of two facts, one, that Lord Ram loves Bharat intensely*1, and two, that the Lord's devotees are superior to the Lord himself*2. Therefore, Mother Nature ensured that Bharat is subjected to the least of troubles as it would please Lord Ram immensely on the one hand, and on the other hand it would be her humble attempt to serve the Lord by serving his devotee Bharat whom the Lord loves so dearly.

{*1Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 205; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 208; (iii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 217.

*2Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 16 that precedes Doha no. 120.}}

चौ०. जड़ चेतन मग जीव घनेरे । जे चितए प्रभु जिन्ह प्रभु हेरे ॥ १ ॥

ते सब भए परम पद जोगू । भरत दरस मेटा भव रोगू ॥ २ ॥

caupāṭi.

jaṛa cētana maga jīva ghanērē. jē cita'ē prabhu jinha prabhu hērē. 1.
tē saba bha'ē parama pada jōgū. bharata darasa mētā bhava rōgū. 2.

All the animate creatures as well as inanimate things (such as human beings, animals, insects, worms and birds, as well as trees, mountains, rivers, rocks, earth etc. respectively) who had seen Lord Ram earlier or the Lord had viewed them while passing by (on his outward journey to the forest)—verily indeed, all such countless creatures and things were blessed already,--- (1)

--- And when they saw Bharat, or Bharat viewed them even casually while passing by, there is no doubt that all of them became eligible to attain the supreme state of existence known as the 'Param Pad' (parama pada), for beyond that exalted state there is nothing more to be achieved¹. (2)

[Note—¹The phrase 'param pad' literally means the supreme stature or the supreme state of existence that any living being or thing can ever expect to attain, for there is nothing better or superior. From spiritual and metaphysical perspective, this state refers to Moksha, the ultimate dissolution of when the entity becomes one with the Supreme Entity known as the cosmic Consciousness, or Brahm. Once this objective is attained, the cycle of birth and death ends, and the entity attains supreme bliss, peace, tranquility and stability; it is a state of ultimate beatitude and felicity. The Upanishads like to call it liberation and deliverance from the cycle of birth and death in this mortal world, leading to emancipation and salvation of the soul.

We must remember here that what appears to be 'inanimate' to us, e.g. a tree or a rock or a river or the soil under our feet, actually has some sort of life in it. Botany is a science of plants that has proved that all such entities of the plant kingdom indeed have 'life' in them. Similarly, all the other elements of creation, such as the sky, air, water, fire, earth, though appearing to be lifeless and inane on their face, do represent life in some or the other form. For instance, soil produces plants and fosters life on earth; it is full of microbes and other elementary forms of life, and without soil the earth would be lifeless. Similarly, everyone knows the importance of water as source of life, and so is also the case with air. As for fire element, though its ruthlessness is legendary as it burns everything it touches, nevertheless is essential for sustaining life on earth.

Rocks and mountains are different forms of earth; rivers, streams, lakes etc, are various forms of water; fire itself exists in many forms, some latent and hidden from view, and other forms that are apparent and visible.

If any sample of soil, water, air is examined under a microscope or any other scientific instrument meant for their examination and analysis of their contents, we find that they are teeming with life forms; forms of life that are not visible to our naked eye but which nevertheless exist—in the form of one-cell to multi-cell organisms that are present in the soil (earth, mountain), water (river, lake, stream) and air (atmosphere).

Some may argue that a piece of 'rock' is completely lifeless, and to say it can be 'delivered or attain a param pad' is a height of absurdity. Well, we can cite two instances that would help us understand that rocks do have some form of life in them.

One is that often it is seen that small plants, green or thorny, strike a root on a rock face and grow. Sometimes, the root even bores itself through the rock itself and causes it to crack. Had the rock been completely lifeless, it could not have provided nourishment to support the life of the plant that has made it its dwelling place.

The other is the legendary story of 'Ahilya' which we have already read earlier in Baal Kand of Ram Charit Manas (apropos: Chaupai line nos. 11-12 and Chanda line nos. 1-16 that precede Doha no. 211). She was the wife of sage Gautam and had been cursed to become a 'stone'. When Lord Ram touched that 'lifeless stone' it transmuted into a living being, a lady named Ahilya, the wife of sage Gautam. Just think over the matter: on the face of it, it was a lifeless stone, but who knew that it was 'not' a stone but a lady in that form. This story of Ahilya tells us that there were so many trees, rocks, water-bodies and other inanimate things that looked lifeless from the outside, but they were not actually so. All such entities found deliverance and emancipation when Lord Ram saw or touched them, or they themselves saw the Lord. Whatever negative remnants of their past remained that may still have blocked the way to their attaining ultimate beatitude was taken care of by Bharat now.

In this context, refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 113; (b) Aranya Kand, (ii) Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 36; (c) Sundar Kand, (iii) Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 49.]

यह बड़ि बात भरत कइ नाहीं । सुमिरत जिनहि रामु मन माहीं ॥ ३ ॥

बारक राम कहत जग जेऊ । होत तरन तारन नर तेऊ ॥ ४ ॥

भरतु राम प्रिय पुनि लघु भ्राता । कस न होइ मगु मंगलदाता ॥ ५ ॥

सिद्ध साधु मुनिबर अस कहहीं । भरतहि निरखि हरषु हियँ लहहीं ॥ ६ ॥

yaha baḍi bāta bharata ka'i nāhīm. sumirata jinahi rāmu mana māhīm. 3.
bāraka rāma kahata jaga jē'ū. hōta tarana tārana nara tē'ū. 4.
bharatu rāma priya puni laghu bhrātā. kasa na hō'i magu maṅgaladātā. 5.
sid'dha sādhu munibara asa kahahīm. bharatahi nirakhi haraṣu hiyaṁ³
lahahīm. 6.

Such a remarkable feat and honour are not unexpected for Bharat, because even Lord Ram honours and adores him by constantly remembering him in his heart¹. (3)

In this mortal world, if a living being (a creature) utters the holy and divine name of Lord Ram even once², he not only becomes eligible for attaining liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation for himself, but he is empowered to grant this spiritual benefit to others too, for they are benefited by his company and teachings. (4)

Bharat is Lord Ram's very dear, and he is the Lord's younger brother too. Say then, why would it not be a special case for Bharat as he wended his way through the forest; what wonder is there if all sorts of auspiciousness should occur to Bharat on his path through the forest (especially when he was going to the forest to meet Lord Ram and plead for forgiveness, and also ask the Lord to return home)³. (5)

The lofty glories of Bharat, and his worthiness for receiving special mention and honour as stated herein above, were unanimously applauded and reiterated even by renowned sages, mystics and pious souls who themselves felt very privileged and exhilarated in their hearts when they saw him⁴. (6)

[Note—¹This fact had been endorsed by the deity of Prayag as well as by sage Bharadwaj—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 205 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it (Prayag); and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 3-6 that precede Doha no. 208 (Bharadwaj).

²The glories and divinity of Lord Ram's holy name are enumerated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 19—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 28; (ii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 108 (Lord Shiva).

³Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 2-6 that precede Doha no. 183; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 3-6 that precede Doha no. 210; (iii) Doha no. 222 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it; (iv) Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 223.

⁴Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 220; (ii) Doha no. 223 along with Chaupai line nos. 2-6 that precede it. To wit, wherever Bharat went, whomsoever Bharat met, whoever came in contact with him, from the lowest to the highest of creatures—all had nothing but praise for him. He was universally praised, unanimously lauded and unequivocally appreciated everywhere by everyone.]

देखि प्रभाउ सुरेसहि सोचू । जगु भल भलेहि पोच कहूँ पोचू ॥ ७ ॥
गुर सन कहेउ करिअ प्रभु सोई । रामहि भरतहि भेट न होई ॥ ८ ॥

dēkhi prabhā'u surēsahi sōcū. jagu bhala bhalēhi pōca kahum' pōcū. 7.
gura sana kahē'u kari'a prabhu sōī. rāmahi bharatahi bhēṭa na hōī. 8.

When the king of the gods (i.e. Indra) observed this phenomenon that everyone was appreciating Bharat and praising his character, and endorsing his decision to go to the forest and bring Lord Ram back, he became worried¹.

He rued over the matter and grumbled that it was not something that portends good for the community of gods, muttering to himself that let the world call him evil, selfish, crooked and wicked, but something must be done to prevent Bharat from succeeding in his plans (to meet Lord Ram and take him back home to Ayodhya)². (7)

Bewildered and unable to decide what to do next, Indra approached his guru, sage Sukracharaya, and said to him (i.e. pleaded with or requested him): 'Oh Lord, please do something so that the meeting between Lord Ram and Bharat does not happen*'.
[*This request of Indra can be read as follows also: "Oh Lord, please do something so that Bharat is unable to meet Lord Ram."] (8)

[Note—¹Why did Indra become worried? Well, he was alarmed because he felt that if Lord Ram becomes emotional and is moved by earnest entreaties and heartfelt pleadings of Bharat to return home to Ayodhya, a fear he expressly mentions in Doha no. 217 herein below, then the entire plan to get rid of the cruel demon race would come a cropper—because it can be done only if Lord Ram proceeds to their den in Lanka and eliminate them himself, for no one else in this world would be able to do it except the Lord. In fact, this was the very reason why the Supreme Being had come to earth as Lord Ram in the first place, and he had done so on the prayers of the gods and mother earth (apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 184—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 187).

²But Indra refrained from creating any hindrance in the path of Bharat's progress to meet Lord Ram as he feared a severe backlash from every quarter of the world. It is because he saw that everyone was very appreciative of Bharat and highly praised his conduct, and so if it is found out that Indra is creating some king mischief then surely he would be condemned as a evil villain, leading to instant contempt and scorn from everyone. Since he was the 'king of gods', the entire community of gods whom the world offers prayers would become an object of ridicule and contempt, so much so that there were fair chances that the world would stop esteeming them as well as offering prayers and other types of respects to them.

Hence, Indra was perplexed and uncertain as what to do next.

We have read earlier that when it was decided by king Dasrath that Lord Ram would be anointed as the next ruler of the kingdom of Ayodhya and preparations were underway for the Lord's coronation ceremony, Indra had become similarly worried, for if Lord Ram did not go to the forest then the main purpose of his coming to the earth, which was the elimination of the tyranny of the demons, would be defeated. At that time Indra and other gods had approached Saraswati, the patron goddess of wisdom and speech, to intervene on their behalf and do something that would prevent Lord Ram from ascending the throne and go to the forest instead. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 11—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 12.}

We also learn that this attitude of Indra and the gods have given them the infamy of being 'selfish*', and as being 'those who occupy high positions, but in the way they act they are most lowly#'.

{*Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 295; (b) Lanka Kand, (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 110.

#Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 12.]

दो०. रामु सँकोची प्रेम बस भरत सपेम पयोधि ।

बनी बात बेगरन चहति करिअ जतनु छलु सोधि ॥ २१७ ॥

dōhā.

rāmu samkōcī prēma basa bharata sapēma payōdhi.

banī bāta bēgarana cahati kari'a jatanu chalu sōdhi. 217.

[So then, why would Indra wish that Bharat does not meet Lord Ram? He answers this question himself as follows—]

Indra continued: ‘Lord Ram is very accommodating, benevolent, magnanimous, loving, obliging and gracious in his heart by nature, and Bharat is an ocean of the virtues of love and affection for the Lord.

[Now, when Bharat would weep and fall down at the Lord’s feet, pleading with the Lord to forgive him and oblige him by returning home and accepting the crown of the kingdom of Ayodhya, it would be well-nigh impossible for Lord Ram to deny Bharat’s request; the Lord would find it difficult to sternly tell Bharat he won’t oblige the latter, because Lord Ram is ever-obliging, benevolent, gracious, magnanimous, loving and soft in his heart. Should this happen, the entire plan would come apart; it would prove disastrous for the gods and the rest of the creation because then the demons would continue to thrive and rampage through the world with impunity.]

So therefore, the whole plan that has been successfully implemented till now would come a cropper, and everything would be ruined.

Hence, please devise a device and maneuver things in such a clever way so that the entire plan (whereby the world would be freed from the tyranny of the demons) could be carried out to its successful end.’ (Doha no. 217)

[Note—Bhakti has such a profound importance that Lord Ram loves those who practice it so much that if someone does anything that is directly offending for the Lord, the Lord would gladly excuse the offender. But if the same offence is cause against the Lord’s devotee who practices Bhakti—i.e. a person who has devotion and love for the Lord, who has surrendered himself before the Lord and adores him, who has taken refuge with the Lord and relies upon him for solace and succour—then the Lord would never accept it and is sure to punish the offender who has caused harm or pain to the devotee.

In the verses that follow herein below, this fact has been reiterated by the Guru (moral teacher) of the gods when he told Indra, the king of gods, not to disturb Bharat when the latter was trying to persuade Lord Ram to come back with him to Ayodhya.]

चौ०. बचन सुनत सुरगुरु मुसुकाने । सहसनयन बिनु लोचन जाने ॥ १ ॥

मायापति सेवक सन माया । करइ त उलटि परइ सुरराया ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

bacana sunata suraguru musukānē. sahasanayana binu lōcana jānē. 1.

māyāpati sēvaka sana māyā. kara'i ta ulaṭi para'i surarāyā. 2.

The guru of the gods smiled when he heard the selfish words of the gods who were discussing amongst themselves about ways to prevent Bharat from succeeding in persuading Lord Ram to come back with him to the kingdom¹. The Guru decided that the king of gods was blind though he had a thousand eyes (because he is not able to see the truth and realize the gravity of the situation). (1)

So the guru advised the king of gods (Indra) thus: ‘Listen oh King of the Gods! If you try your dirty tricks against a devotee of the Lord who himself is the Lord of Maya, the ‘Lord who creates delusions and is a Grand Master of tricks’, all your plans would come unstuck and undesirable things that you don’t want to happen would result. [So beware and keep quiet.] (2)

[Note—¹To wit, the gods feared that if Lord Ram takes pity on Bharat and decides to return, then the whole purpose of the Lord's descending upon earth to kill the cruel demons would be made null and void. So they began scheming against Bharat. Their guru smiled at their childish behaviour and warned them not to play dirty tricks upon the Lord's devotee.]

तब किछु कीन्ह राम रुख जानी । अब कुचालि करि होइहि हानी ॥ ३ ॥
 सुनु सुरेस रघुनाथ सुभाऊ । निज अपराध रिसाहिं न काऊ ॥ ४ ॥
 जो अपराधु भगत कर करई । राम रोष पावक सो जरई ॥ ५ ॥

taba kichu kīnha rāma rukha jānī. aba kucāli kari hō'ihi hānī. 3.
 sunu surēsa raghunātha subhā'ū. nija aparādha risāhiṁ na kā'ū. 4.
 jō aparādhu bhagata kara kara'ī. rāma rōṣa pāvaka sō jara'ī. 5.

You had done what you did earlier (when circumstances had to be created so Lord Ram could go to the forest to eliminate the cruel demons and free the earth of their horrors) because it was the wish of Lord Ram that it should be so done¹.

But mind you, if you play mischief now (when Bharat, the Lord's faithful brother and devotee) has come to plead personally before the Lord, you will be committing the gravest of errors of your life. So don't do it! (3)

The guru of the gods told Indra, the king of gods: 'Oh King of Gods! Listen to the nature of Lord Ram. The Lord never gets angry at anyone if the latter causes any offence to the Lord personally. (4)

But if any offence is caused to the devotee of the Lord, then the offender is reduced to ashes (i.e. punished severely) by the wrath of the Lord². (5)

[Note—¹Earlier, the gods had conspired to instigate Kaikeyi so that the events could be turned in such a way that Lord Ram could go to the forest and kill the demons and bless all those whom he met en-route. This act of the Gods was acceptable then as it was also the wish of the Lord. But now the circumstances were different—now one of Lord Ram's ardent devotee and faithful follower, i.e. his brother Bharat, was trying to plead directly to the Lord to come back to Ayodhya. So if the Gods threw a spanner in this wheel and created mischief, it would be unpardonable and would invite the Lord's punishment.

²The devotee of Lord Ram is dear to the Lord like his own life or breath ('Pran'); the Lord is pleased by serving his devotees, and if anyone treats them as his enemy then the Lord also treats such a person as his enemy, i.e. a person who harms the Lord's devotees, incurs the Lord's wrath.]

लोकहुँ बेद बिदित इतिहासा । यह महिमा जानहिं दुरबासा ॥ ६ ॥
 भरत सरिस को राम सनेही । जगु जप राम रामु जप जेही ॥ ७ ॥

lōkahum^ṁ bēda bidita itihāsā. yaha mahimā jānahim durabāsā. 6.
bharata sarisa kō rāma sanēhī. jagu japa rāma rāmu japa jēhī. 7.

These undeniable facts are well known in all the corners of the world (lōkahum^ṁ bidita); they are endorsed even by the ancient scriptures such as the Vedas and Purans (bēda bidita itihāsā).

The importance of a devotee and the mystical powers he possesses that always protects him from any harm that might come his way is also known by sage Durbasa¹. (6)

Verily indeed, in all sooth and without gainsay, who is more dear to Lord Ram than Bharat is, for the world pays its respects to Lord Ram by remembering the Lord and repeating his holy name (i.e. doing Japa by using Lord Ram's name) while the Lord himself repeats the name of Bharat constantly as the latter's name is constantly on the Lord's lips. (7)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 265.

This story relates to king Ambarish and sage Durbasa, and it is as follows in brief:

King Ambrish was a great devotee of the Lord and faithfully kept fast on Ikadashi days (the 11th day of the first fortnight of the moon). The scriptures prescribe that the fast of the Ikadashi should be broken the next day on Dwadashi but before the third or Trayodashi by offering food to a Brahmin who comes first on the day of Dwadashi. Incidentally, sage Durbasa, known for his hot temper and wrathful nature, came, and was invited by the king to accept meals. The sage accepted but went out to do his rituals from which he did not return on time. Meanwhile, the auspicious time was soon due to expire, so in his predicament, Ambarish was advised by Brahmin advisors to put a leaf of Tulsi (basil plant) in his mouth to break the fast. When Durbasa returned, he became so enraged that he cursed Ambarish to take birth ten times. Not contented, he produced a demoness called Kritya (कृत्या) and ordered her to eat the king. It was too much for the Lord to bear—so he ordered his 'Chakra' (discus) which cut the demoness' head and rushed at Durbasa. He ran in panic from place to place in the 3 Lokas, but no one gave him shelter. At last, he sought forgiveness from Vishnu who ordered him to go and ask for forgiveness from Ambarish. Durbasa came and fell at the king's feet. Then Vishnu said that he accepts the curse himself (in place of Ambarish) and shall take birth as a human on this earth (as an incarnation) ten times, while at the same time he relieved his devotee Ambarish of the curse.

Sage Brihaspati, the guru of the gods, warned Indra, the king of the gods, that one should not torment a devotee of Lord Ram, in this case Bharat, as any such attempt would misfire and boomerang on the tormentor.]

दो०. मनहुँ न आनिअ अमरपति रघुबर भगत अकाजु ।
अजसु लोक परलोक दुख दिन दिन सोक समाजु ॥ २१८ ॥
dōhā.

manahum̐ na āni'a amarapati raghubara bhagata akāju.
ajasu lōka paralōka dukha dina dina sōka samāju. 218.

The guru of the gods warned Indra, their king: ‘Oh the King of Immortals (ie. the Gods; ‘amarapati’)! Never ever harbour any thought in your mind about disturbing the work of a devotee of Lord Ram and causing annoyance to him. For god forbid, if you erroneously happen to undertake any such misadventure then you would not only invite great infamy, ridicule and scorn in this world but would also get sorrow and grief in the next world, besides experiencing woes and torments in your day-to-day life.

[To wit, even the thought of coming in the way of a devotee of Lord Ram would be the single cause of all your miseries and misfortunes. So, please be well advised to steer clear of such misadventure as it would be counter productive and ruinous for you all.]’ (Doha no. 218)

चौ०. सुनु सुरेस उपदेसु हमारा । रामहि सेवकु परम पिआरा ॥ १ ॥
मानत सुखु सेवक सेवकाई । सेवक बैर बैरु अधिकाई ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

sunu surēsa upadēsu hamārā. rāmaḥi sēvaku parama pi'ārā. 1.
mānata sukhu sēvaka sēvakā'īm. sēvaka baira bairu adhikā'īm. 2.

‘Listen oh King of Gods; listen to my advice. Lord Ram loves his devotee and follower most dearly. (1)

The Lord feels happy if his devotee feels happy; and on the other hand if someone creates enmity with the Lord’s devotee then the Lord develops a greater enmity with the devotee’s enemy.

[To wit, nothing pleases the Lord than when his dear devotee is happy. So it is always advisable to serve the devotee and keep him in good humour. In the same vein, if someone develops enmity with a devotee of the Lord, then it is sure that the Lord becomes his greatest enemy. The Lord will bless those who are kind to his devotees, and punish those who offend the devotee.]¹ (2)

[Note—¹Sage Kaagbhusund, the saintly crow, had unequivocally told Garud, the mount of Lord Vishnu who had gone to the latter to hear the narration of the divine story of Lord Ram in order to remove some misunderstandings and confusions that had arisen in his mind, that ‘Lord Ram’s devotee is superior to Lord Ram himself; the devotee is of a greater importance and is worthy of more respect than Lord Ram himself’—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 16 that precedes Doha no. 120.

Hence, the guru of the gods warned Indra and other gods not to play fool with Bharat at all, for if they transgress boundaries of decency in their selfish zeal to somehow prevent Bharat from taking Lord Ram back to Ayodhya, then it is surely going to backfire on them, and then it would be too late for rectifying their mistake—because beyond certain limits Lord Ram would not tolerate that Bharat is made to suffer excess of mental agony and shame just because the gods want the Lord to go to the forest in order to eliminate the scourge of the demons, and the consequences

would be far more disastrous for the gods than to have patience and let Lord Ram tackle the situation himself by dealing with Bharat in a polite and affectionate manner.]

जद्यपि सम नहिं राग न रोषू । गहहिं न पाप पूनु गुन दोषू ॥ ३ ॥

करम प्रधान बिस्व करि राखा । जो जस करइ सो तस फलु चाखा ॥ ४ ॥

jadyapi sama nahim rāga na rōṣū. gahahim na pāpa pūnu guna dōṣū. 3.
karama pradhāna bisva kari rākhā. jō jasa kara'i sō tasa phalu cākhā. 4.

Though it is certainly true that Lord Ram has exemplary equanimity and treats all alike, as he has no attachment with anyone nor detests anyone, and neither is the Lord affected by the sins of others nor is he moved by their goodness as he maintains neutrality and dispassion for all in this world, --- (3)

--- For it is indeed true that this mortal world is governed by the Law of Karma which stipulates that a person tastes the fruit of his actions and gets a reward in accordance to his deeds¹, (4) ---

[Note—¹To wit, though it is true that the Lord has ordained that the world would be driven by the principles of action and reaction, or the principle of Karma which says that a man reaps what he sows, but still the Lord treats each individual according to the level of devotion, humility and submission he has for the Lord. That is, the Lord would forgive and consider sympathetically the case of those who are devoted to him, ask for forgiveness, offer all their deeds and their fruits to the Lord, and submit before him unconditionally, as compared to those who are sinful and opposed to the Supreme Being. In other words, everything depends upon the individual and his own spiritual inclinations.]

तदपि करहिं सम बिषम बिहारा । भगत अभगत हृदय अनुसार ॥ ५ ॥

अगुन अलेप अमान एकरस । रामु सगुन भए भगत पेम बस ॥ ६ ॥

tadapi karahim sama biṣama bihārā. bhagata abhagata hṛdaya anusārā. 5.
aguna alēpa amāna ēkarasa. rāmu saguna bha'e bhagata pēma basa. 6.

--- Still the Lord treats a person in consonance with the feelings of the person's heart, for the Lord decides his attitude and response towards a person depending upon whether that person is pious with a purity of heart that comes naturally to a devotee of the Lord, or if he is deceitful and sinful inside¹. (5)

Indeed it is true that though the Lord is without any attributes, unattached, neutral, without any preferences and bias, formless and invisible in his primary cosmic form as the Supreme Being, yet it is undeniable that he has assumed or revealed himself in a visible form of a human being for the sake of his devotees². (6)

[Note—¹To wit, though the Lord practices equality, equanimity and dispassion in this world, yet he is very prudent while dealing with creatures of different characters and virtues. If the concerned person is a true devotee of the Lord, if he practices Bhakti in the true sense, then he must have a pure heart that is free from worldly taints and spiritual impurities. The Lord would obviously love such a person. On the opposite side of the scale, if the person is dirty in his heart there is no chance the Lord would love him like the person who has a clean and pious heart.

²The Supreme Being became a human being not because he wished to enjoy the pleasures and comforts of a physical world of material objects, but because he wished to please his Bhaktas, i.e. his ardent devotees, who wished to see the Lord amongst themselves so that they could have a close interaction with the Lord they loved. Surely there was no other reason except his love for his devotees and his desire to keep their wishes that the formless and sublime Lord assumed a physical form that is visible and gross like any other human being.]

राम सदा सेवक रुचि राखी । बेद पुरान साधु सुर साखी ॥ ७ ॥
अस जियँ जानि तजहु कुटिलाई । करहु भरत पद प्रीति सुहाई ॥ ८ ॥

rāma sadā sēvaka ruci rākhī. bēda purāna sādhu sura sākhi. 7.
asa jiyam̐ jāni tajahu kuṭilāī. karahu bharata pada prīti suhāī. 8.

Verily indeed, forsooth and without gainsay, Lord Ram always keeps the wishes of his servants (i.e. devotees and followers); the Lord invariably ensures that whatever they wish is always fulfilled. This fact has been endorsed by the Vedas, the Purans and saints, and their bear witness to it. (7)

Keeping all these things in mind, you should abandon all crooked thoughts and get them off from your heart. Instead of trying to cause mischief, you ought to have purity of affection for the august feet of Bharat (as this attitude will serve your purpose better and more fruitfully, while trying to play smart would go against you and spoil the whole thing)¹. (8)

[Note—¹The gods' guru told Indra, their king: "Doth thou wot naught why am I advising thee not to act smart with Bharat and try dirty tricks upon him, but instead offer your respects to him and bow before his feet? It is because otherwise Lord Ram will teach thee a bitter lesson by agreeing to Bharat's request to return home, leaving thee and thy brother gods in the lurch, for then who wilt go and slay the demons and get rid of Ravana who hast been causing all sorts of torments to all the gods? Thou wilt be left high and dry, I warn thee."

In this context, refer also to sage Brihaspati's advice to Indra in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 265—to Chapai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 266.]

दो०. राम भगत परहित निरत पर दुख दुखी दयाल ।
भगत सिरोमनि भरत तें जनि डरपहु सुरपाल ॥ २१९ ॥

dōhā.

rāma bhagata parahita nirata para dukha dukhī dayāla.
bhagata sirōmani bharata tēm jani ḍarapahu surapāla. 219.

[The guru of the gods continued—] ‘A true devotee of Lord Ram always thinks of and is engaged in the welfare of others; he is very sensitive to the sufferings of others and feels sad when others are suffering.

This being the case, oh the King of the Gods, you shouldn’t at all worry with respect to Bharat because he is the most exalted and the best amongst all the devotees. (Doha no. 219)

[Note—“To wit, Bharat would definitely not do anything which would cause the world to suffer; he would definitely not allow the demons to run amok in this world, creating terror all around. He is going to the forest because he feels guilty that his dear Lord Ram was sent away from home to endure hardships in the forest in his name; Bharat wants to clear his name in this unfortunate development. But surely and certainly, he would not stop Lord Ram from proceeding to the forest, and onwards to Lanka, if the elimination of the demons is the main objective.

So therefore, take it easy and heed my advice to shun thinking any harm to Bharat. Let him proceed and meet Lord Ram. Believe me when I say that ultimately Bharat would bow to Lord Ram’s wish, and since the Lord has himself chosen to go to the forest to fulfill his promise made to the gods, sages and mother earth vis-à-vis the demons, there is no cause of alarm for you—because, by-and-by, the Lord would confide with Bharat about this secret mission, and then obviously Bharat would agree to the Lord’s wish and give up from insisting that the Lord return home, only asking the Lord that if he must go to the forest to fulfill his promise made to the gods etc., then he must also keep his promise made to Bharat that he would return home immediately upon the expiry of the mandated fourteen years of living in the forest.”

And this is exactly what had happened—refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 298—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 301; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 307; (iii) Doha no. 314—to Doha no. 316.

In the course of our reading of this fascinating episode we shall come to a point when it would be evident that Indra and the gods were ill-at-ease and very nervous even after their guru had advised them against it, for during the conference held at Chitrakoot where Bharat and Lord Ram sat face-to-face and discussed the matter of the Lord’s return home, a similar situation is narrated as is being done now with respect to the gods and their king Indra being on the edge about the outcome of the meeting between Bharat and Lord Ram (apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 265; (ii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 294—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 296).

At that time, finding that their guru won’t help them against Bharat, the gods in their frustration sought the help of goddess Saraswati once again to prevail upon the mind of everyone and tweak things in such a way that the people become weary of the forest and wish to return home to Ayodhya as soon as possible. She was also requested to prevail upon Bharat to make him abandon his stubbornness in insisting that Lord Ram return home. But Saraswati refused bluntly and chided Indra in most contemptuous words before returning to the heavens. {Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 295.}]

चौ०. सत्यसंध प्रभु सुर हितकारी । भरत राम आयस अनुसारी ॥ १ ॥
 स्वारथ बिबस बिकल तुम्ह होहू । भरत दोसु नहिं राउर मोहू ॥ २ ॥
 caupāī.

satyasandha prabhu sura hitakārī. bharata rāma āyasa anusārī. 1.
 svāratha bibasa bikala tumha hōhū. bharata dōsu nahim rā'ura mōhū. 2.

The guru of the gods concluded his advice to Indra, the king of the gods, with these words: 'Lord Ram is true to his words and a sincere friend of the gods, while Bharat is obedient to the Lord and follows his instructions. (1)

In spite of that, you are being so selfish and driven by vested interests that you have become unwarrantedly agitated and alarmed (regarding the meeting between Bharat and Lord Ram, so much so that you don't want it to materialize).

Verily, Bharat is not at fault at all, but it is your own delusion and ignorance of the facts that has caused so much consternation for you, and made you so upset, worried and nervous.' (2)

[Note—Sage Brihaspati, the guru of the gods, chided Indra for being so suspicious of Bharat, that the latter would ruin the entire plan by compelling Lord Ram to return home, which in turn would prevent the Lord from eliminating the demons. The gods, led by their king Indra, have underestimated Bharat and his wisdom; they don't know how deep Bharat's devotion for Lord Ram is, as well as his readiness to carry out the orders of the Lord like a most obedient servant no matter what happens; they've also forgotten Lord Ram's steadfastness in upholding his words and fulfilling his promises.

The gods are unnecessarily alarmed and agitated because they believe that Bharat is trying to upset their cart by forcing Lord Ram to abandon his plans to go deeper into the forest, and instead return home to Ayodhya, for if Bharat succeeds in his endeavours then the prospect of the elimination of the demons would go for a toss.

But it was not to be so, and the fear of the gods was totally unfounded, for we shall read in the course of our reading of this fascinating story that Bharat has himself asserted that it is a priority for him to obey the orders of Lord Ram and do as the Lord wishes even if it means going back on his declared intention to bring the Lord back home, while the Lord has told him that likewise it was equally important for him to stay in the forest in order to obey the commands of his father.

So the final compromise formula that was devised was that Bharat would give his consent to Lord Ram to remain in the forest for the promised period of fourteen years, while the Lord promised Bharat that he would return home and accept the crown as soon as this period ended. {Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 296; (ii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 298; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 301; (iv) Chaupai line nos. 2-7 that precede Doha no. 306; (v) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 307; (vi) Doha no. 313 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede it; (vii) Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 315; (viii) Doha no. 316 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-8; and (b) Uttar Kand, (ix) Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 1.}

सुनि सुरबर सुगुर बर बानी । भा प्रमोदु मन मिटी गलानी ॥ ३ ॥
बरषि प्रसून हरषि सुरराऊ । लगे सराहन भरत सुभाऊ ॥ ४ ॥

sunī surabara suragura bara bānī. bhā pramōdu mana miṭī galānī. 3.
baraṣi prasūna haraṣi surarā'ū. lagē sarāhana bharata subhā'ū. 4.

When the king of the gods (i.e. Indra) heard the auspicious words of good advice given to him by the guru of the gods (i.e. sage Brihaspati), he felt very glad and reassured, and all the worries and consternations of his Mana (heart and mind) were dispelled. (3)

The king of the gods felt exhilarated and showered flowers upon Bharat even as he began praising the latter's pious and auspicious nature¹. (4)

[Note—¹When Indra discovered that his guru, sage Brihaspati, was so highly impressed by Bharat and his exemplary character that he was unequivocal in his praises for him (Bharat), then surely, thought Indra, there is no doubt about Bharat's excellence and noble nature, and therefore he deserves high praise by one and all.

Showering of flowers was a gesture that showed Indra wished to show his own pleasure as well as honour for Bharat.]

एहि बिधि भरत चले मग जाहीं । दसा देखि मुनि सिद्ध सिहाहीं ॥ ५ ॥
जबहिं रामु कहि लेहिं उसासा । उमगत पेमु मनहुं चहु पासा ॥ ६ ॥

ēhi bidhi bharata calē maga jāhīm. dasā dēkhi muni sid'dha sihāhīm. 5.
jabahīm rāmu kahi lēhīm usāsā. umagata pēmu manahum'cahu pāsā. 6.

In this way, being praised and honoured by everyone whom he met or who saw him even from a distance, including the gods, Bharat kept on moving steadily ahead on the path to the forest.

Sages, mystics and other pious souls who saw Bharat and his condition (mental as well as physical) were all praises for him; they lauded Bharat unanimously and in unequivocal terms¹. [What did they see? The answer is found in the next verse.] (5)

Every now and then, when he (Bharat) would sigh and take a deep breath, uttering the name of Lord Ram, it appeared that a soothing aroma symbolizing the divine virtues of love and affection for Lord Ram emanated from him and spread in all the directions around him, lending a pleasant feeling to all those who saw and heard Bharat in this condition*.

[*This verse can be read as follows too: "Every now and then, whenever Bharat sighed and took a deep breath while uttering the name of Lord Ram, it seemed that a soothing and fragrant breeze representing the virtues of love and affection for Lord Ram emanated from his mouth and spread in all the directions around him, lending a pleasant feeling to all those who saw and heard Bharat in this condition."]

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 217; (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 326.]

द्रवहिं बचन सुनि कुलिस पषाना । पुरजन पेमु न जाइ बखाना ॥ ७ ॥
बीच बास करि जमुनहिं आए । निरखि नीरु लोचन जल छाए ॥ ८ ॥

dravahim bacana suni kulisa paṣānā. purajana pēmu na jā'i bakhānā. 7.
bīca bāsa kari jamunahim ā'ē. nirakhi nīru lōcana jala chā'ē. 8.

His sighs and deep breaths, his sorrowful physical condition and soulful utterances of Lord Ram's name every now and then were so heart touching, woeful and mournful that even hardened rocks became soft and mellowed with pity for him.

If this was the condition of rocks, then one can imagine what would have been the emotional condition of the citizens who accompanied Bharat, as well as of those who met him on the way, for indeed their love for Lord Ram was kindled and reached so high a state by the good influence of Bharat's own love for the Lord that it cannot be described in words. (7)

After halting for some time somewhere on the way, Bharat and his entourage reached the banks of river Yamuna.

When he saw the colour of the water of the river, tears welled up in Bharat's eyes. [Why was Bharat so overcome with emotions on seeing the river that he would be on the verge of weeping? The answer is given in the next Doha no. 220 that follows herein below.] (8)

दो०. रघुबर बरन बिलोकि बर बारि समेत समाज ।
होत मगन बारिधि बिरह चढ़े बिबेक जहाज ॥ २२० ॥

dōhā.

raghubara barana bilōki bara bāri samēta samāja.
hōta magana bāridhi biraha caṛhē bibēka jahāja. 220.

No sooner did Bharat and his party see that the water of the river was dark-coloured like the hue of Lord Ram's complexion¹, than they were all overwhelmed with a fresh wave of grief of separation from the Lord that struck them like a mighty wave of an ocean-of-grief.

This wave would have swept them all away had they not quickly taken refuge by boarding a symbolic ship of wisdom, patience and courage that one should have in the face of adversity, and which ship helped them to ride over the onslaught of grief and sadness that otherwise seemed to have overcome them². (Doha no. 220)

[Note—¹The water of river Yamuna has a dark hue like the complexion of Lord Ram—refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 109.

²A general word of good advice is found here: it is that when one faces adverse situations, then the best course of action is not to succumb to circumstances by falling

prey to emotions and sentiments, but to act wisely, have patience, apply one's mind, collect one's wits together, and show resilience, fortitude and forbearance. If one is wise enough to pay heed to this advice, then surely he would see light at the other end of the tunnel; for otherwise he would be sucked in a quagmire of despair, gloom and doom.]

चौ०. जमुन तीर तेहि दिन करि बासू । भयउ समय सम सबहि सुपासू ॥ १ ॥
रातिहिं घाट घाट की तरनी । आई अगनित जाहिं न बरनी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

jamuna tīra tēhi dina kari bāsū. bhaya'u samaya sama sabahi supāsū. 1.
rātihiṁ ghāṭa ghāṭa kī taranī. āīṁ aganita jāhiṁ na baranī. 2.

The party made a halt for the day on the banks of river Yamuna. Everyone was taken care of and provided with whatever was available by way of light meals and comforts¹. (1)

During the night, different kinds of boats, small and big, came from all other crossing points along the banks of the river and assembled at the point where Bharat's party had halted for the night². (2)

[Note—¹It is to be remarked that Bharat and his royal assistants made it a point to see that everyone in the party was taken due care of and provided with necessary provisions at every place the entourage halted at the end of the day's journey. In this context, refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 198.

²No sooner the news spread amongst the boatmen that a huge party has arrived on the banks of the river and it would need boats to cross over to the other side, there was eagerness amongst them as a community to help in the crossing, because it meant business for them.

Further, when they learnt it was not an ordinary party but was Bharat's party as he was going to meet Lord Ram, and that he was accompanied by Guha Nishad, the chief of the boatman community, their joy knew no bounds, because now their attitude changed from merely getting some revenue by way of fare that they got routinely for taking people across the river, to an attitude of doing a great service that would grant them an honour for being a part of this noble enterprise.

So therefore, every boatman vied with his companion to become the first one in the line to offer his service and boat to Bharat and his companions as soon as the need arose for some transport across the river the next day.

Each boatman felt himself privileged and blessed to help Bharat cross the river, because they felt that by helping a devotee of Lord Ram reach his beloved Lord they were doing a great spiritual service, which would indeed be a rare opportunity for them; it would be a great blessing-in-disguise for every one of them.]

प्रात पार भए एकहि खेवाँ । तोषे रामसखा की सेवाँ ॥ ३ ॥

चले नहाइ नदिहि सिर नाई । साथ निषादनाथ दोउ भाई ॥ ४ ॥

prāta pāra bha'e ēkahi khēvām̃. tōṣē rāmasakhā kī sēvām̃. 3.
calē nahā'i nadihi sira nā'ī. sātha niṣādanātha dō'u bhā'ī. 4.

At day break the next morning, the whole party was rowed across the river in a single trip. Everyone was pleased and satisfied by the service rendered by the friend of Lord Ram (here meaning Guha Nishad as well as all the boatmen who had become friendly with Lord Ram when the Lord had crossed the same river on his way to Chitrakoot earlier)¹. (3)

Once they were on the other side of the river, Bharat and his companions took a bath in river Yamuna. After that, they bowed their heads before the deity of this holy river, and then the party, with the two brothers (Bharat and Shatrughan) and Nishad, moved ahead on its journey. (4)

[Note—¹We have read earlier too that Guha Nishad, who was the chief of the boatman community, had always ensured that when the need arose to arrange for boats to cross a river, he made necessary arrangements very quickly and easily, first for Lord Ram, and then for Bharat. The answer is obvious: as soon as the news spread amongst the members of his community that their chief has arrived, it was natural for every boatman to come and pay his respects to their leader. And so it was easy for Guha Nishad to make quick arrangements for the crossings.

In this context, refer the note appended to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 104.

The phrase “rāmasakhā”, meaning “Lord Ram’s friend”, is normally applied to Guha Nishad. But this author has thought it fit and proper to include all the members of the boatman community within the ambit of its meaning because everyone was very friendly with Lord Ram, and each boatman served cheerfully, with a smile and joy in his heart, while taking the party of Bharat across river Yamuna like they would have done for their own dear friends.]

आगे मुनिबर बाहन आछें । राजसमाज जाइ सबु पाछें ॥ ५ ॥
तेहि पाछें दोउ बंधु पयादें । भूषन बसन बेष सुठि सादें ॥ ६ ॥
सेवक सुहृद सचिवसुत साथ । सुमिरत लखनु सीय रघुनाथा ॥ ७ ॥
जहँ जहँ राम बास बिश्रामा । तहँ तहँ करहि सप्रेम प्रनामा ॥ ८ ॥

āgēm̃ munibara bāhana āchēm̃. rājasamāja jā'i sabu pāchēm̃. 5.
tēhi pāchēm̃ dō'u bandhu payādēm̃. bhūṣana basana bēṣa suṭhi sādēm̃. 6.
sēvaka suhṛda sacivasuta sāthā. sumirata lakhanu sīya raghunāthā. 7.
jaham̃ jaham̃ rāma bāsa biśrāmā. taham̃ taham̃ karahim̃ saprēma pranāmā. 8.

In the front of the procession was the vehicle carrying the exalted sage Vasistha, and it was followed from behind by the rest of the royal entourage. (5)

In the rear of the procession came the two brothers who walked barefoot¹. They were attired humbly and in a simple way, for the ornaments and royal robes that princes usually wear were shunned by them. (6)

The two brothers (Bharat and Shatrughan) were accompanied by their close associates, such as their personal attendants, as well as the sons of the ministers and courtiers². All of them were lost in remembrance and the thoughts of Lord Ram and Sita as they moved along the path. (7)

Along the way, wherever and whenever they came across a spot where Lord Ram had stayed even for a while, they would stop for a moment and bow before it very affectionately³. (8)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 203; (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 216.

²This order has been followed right from the beginning, from the time Bharat and his entourage left Ayodhya for Chitrakoot—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 187 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede it.

A slight variation is however found in Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 202—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 203 where we read that Bharat alone came last, perhaps because he wanted to be left alone in peace as he was not in the proper frame of mind to talk with anyone.

³Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 198—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 199; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 202; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precede Doha no. 216.]

दो०. मगबासी नर नारि सुनि धाम काम तजि धाइ ।
देखि सरूप सनेह सब मुदित जनम फलु पाइ ॥ २२१ ॥
dōhā.

magabāsī nara nāri suni dhāma kāma taji dhā'i.
dēkhi sarūpa sanēha saba mudita janama phalu pā'i. 221.

When the men and the women folk who lived (in small villages and hamlets) along the way heard of Bharat coming their way, all of them abandoned whatever household and other chores they were engaged in doing at the moment, and rushed out to see him.

Observing Bharat's charming image, all of them were enthralled by this captivating sight; all were overcome with affection for him and felt exhilarated, because they have got the reward of their lives¹. (Doha no. 221)

[Note—¹A similar situation had developed when Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman were passing by these villages and hamlets, and it has been extensively narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 110—to Doha no. 123.

More specifically, refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 110; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 113; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 114; (iv) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 116; (v) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 122; (vi) Doha no. 123.]

चौ०. कहहिं सपेम एक एक पाहीं । रामु लखनु सखि होहिं कि नाहीं ॥ १ ॥

बय बपु बरन रूपु सोइ आली । सीलु सनेहु सरिस सम चाली ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kahahim sapēma ēka ēka pāhīm. rāmu lakhanu sakhi hōhim ki nāhīm. 1.
baya bapu barana rūpu sō'i ālī. sīlu sanēhu sarisa sama cālī. 2.

[There was so much resemblance between Lord Ram and Laxman as a pair on the one hand, and Bharat and Shatrughan as a pair on the other hand, that all those who saw the latter pair, i.e. Bharat and Shatrughan, were confused whether or not they were Lord Ram and Laxman respectively. In these verses we read how the villagers reacted when they saw Bharat and Shatrughan whom they found to be in exact likeness of Lord Ram and Laxman respectively.]

Those who saw Bharat and Shatrughan said affectionately to each other: ‘Oh friend (sakhi)¹, we wonder if they are not Lord Ram and Laxman respectively? (1)

Oh dear friend (ālī)! Their age, form, countenance, complexion and demeanours are the same, and so are their good manners, excellent character, affectionate attitude and friendly nature which are very apparent from their gestures and behaviour, as well as the way they are walking on the path. (2)

[Note—¹The word “sakhi” is a feminine term, which implies that this discussion took place between the women folk who had assembled to see Bharat and his party. While the majority of males were more interested in seeing the huge entourage and its passage on the path passing either through or on the outskirts of the villages and hamlets in which they lived, the females were more attracted by the charm of the two brothers, Bharat and Shatrughan.

This phenomenon of women folk being charmed by the physical beauty of the pair consisting of Bharat and Shatrughan now is not new, because we have already read earlier that they were similarly mesmerized when they saw the pair consisting Lord Ram and Laxman earlier. For instance, refer to these select verses of Ram Charit Manas where we would note that the word “sakhi” has been used every time: (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 220; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 221; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 222; (iv) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 223.

Then there is a verse that specifically mentions women folk as being overcome with affection for Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 121.

That said, we also read that every single person of every age and occupation who saw Lord Ram on his way to the forest, whether they were males or females, young or old—all were equally mesmerized and charmed by the magnetic appeal of

the Lord. There are countless verses that endorse this fact. For instance, refer to these specific verses: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 110; (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 111; (iii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 112; (iv) Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 114; (v) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 115; (vi) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 116; (vii) Doha no. 121.]

बेषु न सो सखि सीय न संग । आगें अनी चली चतुरंगा ॥ ३ ॥
नहिं प्रसन्न मुख मानस खेदा । सखि संदेहु होइ एहिं भेदा ॥ ४ ॥

bēṣu na sō sakhi sīya na saṅgā. āgēm anī calī caturaṅgā. 3.
nahim prasanna mukha mānasa khēdā. sakhi sandēhu hō'i ēhim bhēdā. 4.

[But then, when the women folk closely observed Bharat and Shatrughan they found some difference between the pair of these two brothers and that of Lord Ram they had seen earlier. So they discussed the difference amongst themselves as follows:-]

But friend (sakhi), there appears to be an apparent difference between these two (brothers, i.e. Bharat and Shatrughan) and the pair we had seen earlier. These two princes have a different sort of attire¹, and they are not accompanied by Sita.

Besides this difference, they have an army consisting of its four wings (caturaṅgā)² walking ahead of them. (3)

They (Bharat and Shatrughan) do not seem to be happy, for their facial expressions reflect the condition of their hearts and minds which seem to be overcome with sadness, grief and gloom (unlike the case of Lord Ram and Laxman who looked very cheerful and happy when we saw them)³.

These are some of the reasons and vivid signs which have caused doubts in our minds regarding their true identity (for we are not sure if they are Lord Ram and Laxman respectively, although they resemble the latter by the physical parameters of their bodies, having the same complexion, countenance, age, manners and demeanours).’ (4)

[Note—¹Lord Ram and Laxman were attired in the habit of a hermit, whilst Bharat and Shatrughan wore ordinary clothes, but surely not like those of a hermit. Further, Lord Ram and Laxman had Sita with them, whilst Bharat and Shatrughan didn’t have any lady walking alongside them. So, the difference was obvious.

²The four wings of the army in ancient times were the following: infantry, cavalry, elephants and chariots. In contrast, Lord Ram had only Laxman and Sita as his companions. So once again, the difference was too obvious to be missed.

³Let us ponder for a while and see why Lord Ram looked happy and cheerful, whilst Bharat looked just the opposite, sad, gloomy, thoughtful and remorseful as observed by these simple countryside women folk.

Well, the answer is this: Lord Ram was obeying his father’s orders while going to the forest; the Lord was going on a mission to fulfill his promise of eliminating the demons that he had made to the gods, sages and mother earth long

time ago. Besides this, he wished to travel widely and freely before ascending the throne; he wanted to meet the common people, interact with them at a very personal level, witness first hand their lives and problems; the Lord also wished to enjoy the sounds, smells and sights of the countryside, as well as take in the pristine beauty of Mother Nature. All this would have been difficult for him once he ascended the throne, because then he would be caged and walled-in by protocols, set of rules and regulations, and numerous formalities that a king is subjected to while he wears the crown. A king is like a caged bird; he loses his freedom, and he can't venture out into the open world like a common man. Wherever a king goes he is accompanied by a retinue of servants and courtiers, every action of his is under watch and scrutiny, which simply means he loses his personal freedom to act and do as he pleases. To wit, Lord Ram was very happy while proceeding to the forest before shackles of kingship were put on him and he is chained by numerous rules and protocols, because he would for some time now have a chance to freely breathe the air of the countryside as well as roam freely in the wild forests and enjoy its wildlife for fourteen years at least.

In the case of Bharat, however, the situation was completely different. The reasons are these: Bharat was virtually disobeying his father by refusing to accept the crown, and he was repeatedly reminded by his guru, sage Vasistha, regarding his obligations, but he refused to obey. Bharat had defied his guru by not obeying his advice; he had also disobeyed mother Kaushalya as well as the kingdom's ministers and advisors by refusing to ascend the throne and instead going to the forest to meet Lord Ram (apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 174—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 183). This disobedience of his father, guru, mother and other seniors had made him feel very uneasy and distraught.

Then, the other reason why Bharat was heavy with a sense of guilt was that his name had been dragged into the controversy by his mother in the evil scheme that she had devised on her own accord to send Lord Ram to the forest, without even telling him anything about it. Bharat felt ashamed of himself; he lamented that his reputation had been destroyed for all times to come. Further, he was so sorry and sad that Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman had to suffer in the forest due to him, in his name, on his account. Will he ever be able to clear his name, rued Bharat with a heavy conscience?

He was also uncertain how he would be received and treated by Lord Ram if he did manage to find the Lord somewhere in the forest; will the Lord forgive him, will the Lord embrace him, will the bond of love and affection that existed between the four brothers prior to this sordid drama that was enacted by his wicked mother Kaikeyi stand the test of time and come out shining like the sun emerging from behind dark clouds? Or will Lord Ram reject him, decide not to meet him by leaving the place where he lives at present in the forest and go elsewhere, so that he does not have to face Bharat. All such gloomy thoughts weighed heavily on Bharat's mind and burdened his heart, making him very remorseful, pensive, sad, forlorn and gloomy*, which emotions reflected directly on his face as observed by the country women folk. {*Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 177—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 179; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 181; (iii) Doha no. 182 along with Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precede it; (iv) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 233—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 234.}]

तासु तरक तियगन मन मानी । कहहिं सकल तेहि सम न सयानी ॥ ५ ॥

तेहि सराहि बानी फुरि पूजी । बोली मधुर बचन तिय दूजी ॥ ६ ॥

tāsu taraka tiyagana mana mānī. kahahim sakala tēhi sama na sayānī. 5.
tēhi sarāhi bānī phuri pūjī. bōlī madhura bacana tiya dūjī. 6.

The reasoning and logic given by some of the wise and senior ladies in the group were accepted by others who appreciated them, saying that their wisdom and intelligence could not be matched by anyone else, and that no one was as wise and intelligent as they were (because their arguments are unbeatable and irrefutable). (5)

Having thus praised the ladies (or a particular lady) who had given the above reasoning, some other lady (who had kept quiet till now, but who was aware of the reason why Bharat was going to the forest) intervened, and she spoke politely with a sweet voice (to inform her companions about the developments that had led Bharat to come to the forest). (6)

कहि सपेम सब कथाप्रसंगू । जेहि बिधि राम राज रस भंगू ॥ ७ ॥
भरतहि बहुरि सराहन लागी । सील सनेह सुभाय सुभागी ॥ ८ ॥

kahi sapēma saba kathāprasaṅgū. jēhi bidhi rāma rāja rasa bhaṅgū. 7.
bharatahi bahuri sarāhana lāgī. sīla sanēha subhāya subhāgī. 8.

She narrated in affectionate terms the entire chain of events that culminated in creating an obstacle in Lord Ram ascending the throne. (7)

Then she began praising Bharat lavishly in glowing terms, extolling his good manners, virtuous, noble, affable and auspicious nature, his excellent character, the purity of the virtues of love and affection that he had (for Lord Ram), and how he was worthy of good name and reputation.

[To wit, this lady calmly narrated the entire sequence of events from the beginning, from the point of king Dasrath's decision to anoint Lord Ram to the throne of the kingdom of Ayodhya, right up to the present when Bharat was going to meet the Lord in the forest. This way, she also made it clear that the two princes before them were the younger brothers of Lord Ram, i.e. they were Bharat and Shatrughan respectively.] (8)

दो०. चलत पयादें खात फल पिता दीन्ह तजि राजु ।
जात मनावन रघुबरहि भरत सरिस को आजु ॥ २२२ ॥

dōhā.

calata payādērṁ khāta phala pitā dīnha taji rāju.
jāta manāvana raghubarahi bharata sarisa kō āju. 222.

She said: 'Lord Ram had proceeded to the forest on foot on the orders of his father, and he has been eating fruits to sustain himself since then.

Bharat is going to the forest to plead and ask for forgiveness from Lord Ram, the most exalted of king Raghu's family (raghubarahi), and persuade the Lord to return home. With this background, there is no doubting of the fact that there is no one as good, noble and virtuous as Bharat is, to be found anywhere in the world¹. (Doha no. 222)

[Note—¹We have already read till now* that Bharat has been universally praised by everyone, right from the citizens of Ayodhya, to the gods, the holy pilgrim place known as Triveni, as well as the exalted sage Bharadwaj, and later on we shall read that even Lord Ram has highly praised Bharat and his excellent character#.

{*Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 184 (citizens); (ii) Doha no. 205 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it (Triveni and the gods); (iii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 298; Chaupai line nos. 2-6 that precede Doha no. 210 (sage Bharadwaj).

#Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 231—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 232.}]

चौ०. भायप भगति भरत आचरनू । कहत सुनत दुख दूषन हरनू ॥ १ ॥

जो किलु कहब थोर सखि सोई । राम बंधु अस काहे न होई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

bhāyapa bhagati bharata ācaranū. kahata sunata dukha dūṣana haranū. 1.
jō kichu kahaba thōra sakhi sōī. rāma bandhu asa kāhē na hōī. 2.

[The women folk continued with their praise for Bharat, telling each other—]

‘Bharat’s immaculate character that exemplifies the virtues of brotherly affection, selfless devotion and noble conduct is so exemplary and pure by its nature that merely thinking of them, or listening and talking about them is auspicious, for it is able to decimate all faults and evil tendencies that might taint the mind and heart of others who listen to and talk about Bharat’s glories and virtues.

[To wit, everyone would benefit by thinking, talking or listening about Bharat’s exemplary character, excellent virtues and noble conduct, as this would serve to act as a guideline and benchmarks for others to implement in their own lives.] (1)

Oh dear friend (sakhi), whatever is said in praise of Bharat is too little, for indeed he is so great and glorious, and his virtues are so lofty, that there is no match to be found anywhere for Bharat¹. (2)

[Note—¹A similar idea in praise of Bharat is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 208; Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 210 (by sage Bharadwaj); (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 218 (by the guru of the gods); (iii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 231; Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 259 (by Lord Ram).]

हम सब सानुज भरतहि देखें । भइन्ह धन्य जुबती जन लेखें ॥ ३ ॥

सुनि गुन देखि दसा पछिताहीं । कैकड़ जननि जोगु सुतु नाहीं ॥ ४ ॥

hama saba sānuja bharatahi dēkhēm. bha'inha dhan'ya jubatī jana lēkhēm. 3.
suni guna dēkhi dasā pachitāhīm. kaika'i janani jōgu sutu nāhīm. 4.

By seeing Bharat along with his younger brother (Shatrughan), we consider ourselves very blessed and fortunate; nay, we are the most fortunate ones in the entire community of women folk anywhere in the world, and though we are of a humble origin and very ordinary people but now we are counted as members of a select group of honourable women folk who are most lucky, privileged and blessed¹. (3)

Observing the excellence of Bharat's virtues, nature and character, as well as the purity of his heart, and the depth of his devotion and affection for Lord Ram, the ladies rued and felt sorry for him even as they lamented that he was not fit to be called a 'son' of a mother who is as evil as Kaikeyi. (4)

[Note—¹Even the exalted sage Bharadwaj had no reservations in making a similar observation when Bharat met him. The sage says that by seeing Bharat he considers himself very blessed and fortunate, and thinks that all his penances, austerities and other spiritual practices have borne fruits for him by rewarding him with the opportunity to meet Bharat. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-6 that precede Doha no. 210.}]

What does this imply? The answer is this: More than Lord Ram himself, it is the Lord's devotee who is more important, and this fact has been affirmed by saintly crow and one of the greatest devotees of Lord Ram, i.e. sage Kaagbhusund, in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 16 that precedes Doha no. 120. Refer also to Tulsidas' "Dohawali", verse nos. 473, 528.

And, why is it so? It is because Lord Ram loves his devotees more than anyone else; even the creator Brahma would have no importance for Lord Ram if the former lacks the virtue of devotion for the Lord. This fact has been unequivocally declared by Lord Ram himself in unambiguous terms in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-10 that precede Doha no. 86.]

कोउ कह दूषनु रानिहि नाहिन । बिधि सबु कीन्ह हमहि जो दाहिन ॥ ५ ॥

कहँ हम लोक बेद बिधि हीनी । लघु तिय कुल करतूति मलीनी ॥ ६ ॥

बसहिँ कुदेस कुगाँव कुबामा । कहँ यह दरसु पुन्य परिनामा ॥ ७ ॥

अस अनंदु अचिरिजु प्रति ग्रामा । जनु मरुभूमि कलपतरु जामा ॥ ८ ॥

kō'u kaha dūṣanu rānihi nāhina. bidhi sabu kīnha hamahi jō dāhina. 5.
kaham̐ hama lōka bēda bidhi hīnī. laghu tiya kula karatūti malīnī. 6.
basahīm kudēsa kugām̐va kubāmā. kaham̐ yaha darasu pun'ya parināmā. 7.
asa anandu aciriju prati grāmā. janu marubhūmi kalapataru jāmā. 8.

Some of the ladies in the group, however, thanked their luck for enabling them to see Bharat. They said: 'Actually we should not fault the queen (Kaikeyi) and blame her for doing what she did (by first sending Lord Ram to the forest, and then compelling Bharat to come to the forest in search of the Lord), because all was a device devised

by the Creator who is very benign and favourably inclined towards us. [Why do they praise the Creator? The answer is given in the next verse.] (5)

Well, here are we who are excluded from doing all religious practices and are neglected by the world, we are most lowly of birth and our deeds are lowly too, we are deprived of all honours and privileges, --- (6)

--- We are tribals who live in wooded areas and remote villages that are shunned by civilized society as it regards these places as backward, uncultured and wild, our way of life and practices are primitive.

In this scenario, where would we ever have got this rare privilege and a lucky chance to see the most honourable Bharat, which surely is a reward for doing great meritorious deeds and religious practices¹ (which we have never done), had it not been for the grace of a benign and favourable Creator who has been exceptionally kind on us, for this opportunity was beyond our dreams²! (7)

In this way, there was great excitement, joy and amazement amongst the country folk in all the villages and hamlets passed by Bharat.

It seemed that an evergreen tree known as Kalpa Tree (*kalapataru*) has struck its root in a desert, for the wave of cheer, joy, happiness and excitement that was created in all the places where Bharat went lasted even after his passage, leaving a long-lasting impression on the people who were fortunate to see him³. (8)

[Note—¹Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-6 that precede Doha no. 210.

²When Lord Ram had passed by these villages and hamlets, the humble people had reacted in a similar way—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 114; (ii) Doha no. 120 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 122.

³A similar situation had prevailed when Lord Ram passed through the countryside and its villages and hamlets, for wherever the Lord went there was cheer and joy all around, and the Lord had created such a strong impression on the humble people that after he had gone everyone remembered him, and enshrined his image in their hearts for all times to come. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 118; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 120; (iii) Doha no. 121 and Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes it; (iv) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 122; (v) Doha no. 123.}

To wit, long after Bharat and his party had left these places, the story related to Lord Ram's going to the forest, and of Bharat going to ask for forgiveness from the Lord and plead with him to return home, was told and retold countless numbers of time as it became a legend that was discussed and narrated over and over again by the people of every village and hamlet in the remotest parts of the countryside. This story gave them happiness and joy, and so it became a favourite pastime for everyone.

Refer also to Chaupai line no. 1 that follows Doha no. 223 herein below.]

दो०. भरत दरसु देखत खुलेउ मग लोगन्ह कर भागु।

जनु सिंघलबासिन्ह भयउ बिधि बस सुलभ प्रयागु ॥ २२३ ॥

dōhā.

bharata darasu dēkhata khulē'u maga lōganha kara bhāgu.
janu siṅghalabāsinha bhaya'u bidhi basa sulabha prayāgu. 223.

The auspicious sight of Bharat had opened the box of good luck for the people of the wayside villages and hamlets as if the citizens of Ceylon, the present-day island of Sri Lanka (siṅghalabāsinha), have had the good fortune, by the grace of a favourable Fate, to get an easy access to the holy pilgrim place known as Prayag (which is considered as a 'king of all holy places', and where the three holy rivers, Ganges, Yamuna and Saraswati, meet each other), because ordinarily it was beyond their reach, but if, by a stroke of good luck, they got such an opportunity in their lives, then they considered themselves as being very blessed, lucky, privileged and fortunate¹. (Doha no. 223)

[Note—¹In ancient times, travel across an ocean to a far-away land was very difficult, risky and cumbersome. So, the people who lived in the remote island of Ceylon, that was far away in the south and separated from the mainland by the ocean, would yearn for a chance to go and perform religious rites and take a holy dip in the rivers at Prayag, but physical distance and countless natural hurdles prevented them from fulfilling their desires for generations. So if they got a chance to fulfill their dream-pilgrimage, they considered themselves as exceptionally lucky and privileged.]

Similarly, these humble people of far-flung villages and hamlets had never dreamt that they would ever have the chance to see Lord Ram first, and then his younger brother and great devotee Bharat. But luckily they had this opportunity. Hence, this very thought made them all feel excited and exhilarated, because they considered this opportunity as a great blessing and a rare boon that was granted to them by a favourable Creator in their otherwise dull, mundane and humdrum lives.]

चौ०. निज गुन सहित राम गुन गाथा । सुनत जाहिं सुमिरत रघुनाथा ॥ १ ॥

तीरथ मुनि आश्रम सुरधामा । निरखि निमज्जहिं करहिं प्रनामा ॥ २ ॥

मनहीं मन मागहिं बरु एहू । सीय राम पद पदुम सनेहू ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

nija guna sahita rāma guna gāthā. sunata jāhiṁ sumirata raghunāthā. 1.
tīratha muni āśrama suradhāmā. nirakhi nimajjahiṁ karahiṁ pranāmā. 2.
manahiṁ mana māgahiṁ baru ēhū. sīya rāma pada paduma sanēhū. 3.

As Bharat wended his way through the countryside, he heard his praises as well as the glorious virtues of Lord Ram being narrated and applauded, while he himself constantly remembered the Lord of the Raghus ("raghunāthā"; Lord Ram) as he steadily moved ahead on his path. (1)

Whenever Bharat came across a holy place, or the dwelling place of sage, hermit or an ascetic, or some shrine of a god or deity, he would visit it, take a bath¹ and pay his obeisance by bowing his head. (2)

While offering prayers and paying obeisance at these holy places, Bharat would silently ask for a boon that he should be blessed to have abiding love and affection for the lotus-like holy feet of Lord Ram and Sita. (3)

[Note—¹Normally, all shrines of gods, and dwelling places of sages, hermits and ascetics are located near some kind of water body, be it a pond, lake, river, stream or even a well. It is practical to do so, because water is an essential thing for survival. So, when Bharat passed through a place and saw any such sight, he would pause for a while, refresh himself with a bath, offer prayers at the shrine of the god, or pay his respects to the sage or hermit who lived there, and then move on in his journey for the next destination.]

मिलहिं किरात कोल बनबासी । बैखानस बटु जती उदासी ॥ ४ ॥
करि प्रनामु पूछहिं जेहि तेही । केहि बन लखनु रामु बैदेही ॥ ५ ॥
ते प्रभु समाचार सब कहहीं । भरतहि देखि जनम फलु लहहीं ॥ ६ ॥

milahim kirāta kōla banabāsī. baikhānasa baṭu jatī udāsī. 4.
kari pranāmu pūṁchahiṁ jēhi tēhī. kēhi bana lakhanu rāmu baidēhī. 5.
tē prabhu samācāra saba kahahīm. bharatahi dēkhi janama phalu lahaḥīm. 6.

On the way he also met many hill-and-forest dwelling tribes and their members called Kirats and Kols. [These people of different tribes living in the forest and hills were usually hunters.]

He also encountered mendicants, ascetics and recluses, as well as religious students (who were either travelling to their respective destinations, or lived in these small religious communities in the remote parts of the countryside and forests). (4)

Whoever Bharat met, he would bow his head before the stranger and enquire from him about the forest in which Lord Ram, Laxman and Sita (Vaidehi) lived.

[To wit, Bharat would ask everyone whom he met on the way if they could give him any information about Lord Ram, such as the place where the Lord lived and in which direction should Bharat go so that he could meet the Lord.]¹ (5)

They would inform Bharat everything they knew about Lord Ram², and at the same time these strangers who saw Bharat felt themselves to be very lucky and blessed as if they have been amply rewarded for taking a birth as a human being in this world³. (6)

[Note—¹This verse clearly shows that Bharat or anyone else in his party had no idea where Lord Ram was and where he lived. This also means that sage Bharadwaj had not given Bharat a detailed and specific direction regarding the path he must follow, except to tell him in a general way to go in the direction of Chitrakoot (apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 216).

It was perhaps because the sage wanted to see how sincere and diligent Bharat was in his effort to meet Lord Ram: would he persist in his effort and doggedly pursue his objective of finding Lord Ram no matter where he was, or would he return home after some futile search done in a perfunctory manner just for a show of formality.

During the course of our reading and observations that we have made alongside, Bharat had not visited sage Valmiki. It was because, as noted earlier, Guha Nishad, who was Bharat's guide in the woods and far-away lands, had left Lord Ram on the banks of river Yamuna, from where the Lord proceeded to sage Valmiki's hermitage—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 111 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that follow it.

Hence, Guha Nishad too had no idea that the Lord had gone to meet Valmiki, for had Nishad been aware of it then he would have guided Bharat to the sage's place, and from there any easy and direct direction could be got to Chitrakoot. For remember, it was sage Valmiki who had advised Lord Ram to abide for a while in Chitrakoot—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 132.

Meeting solitary wayfarers and travellers moving in groups or caravans on long-distance journeys was common in those days, and even Lord Ram had met such strangers on the way to the forest (apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 112). Since these people pass through different lands they have a fair idea of the places through which they had passed. When they met their fellow travellers and wayfarers, they would exchange greetings and news of the places they had visited, and this was handy information that would alert others of any danger they might encounter further down or up the road, or of the facilities that were available for them ahead.

So, Bharat too met many such travellers and wayfarers, some of them religious students going from one hermitage to another for further education, some were religious teachers, sages and other religious men on routine visits to some other sage or hermitage, some were traders on their journey from one place to another in the course of their business, some were tribals doing their routine chores, and so on and so forth. Bharat would greet them all and ask them if they could kindly advise him about anything they knew of Lord Ram.

²Fortunately for Bharat, almost everyone he met and asked about Lord Ram had some good information for him about the Lord. The reason is that ever since Lord Ram made Chitrakoot his abode, a steady stream of sages, mendicants, hermits, ascetics, religious teachers and students, ordinary travellers, and members of the different local tribes living in the hills and forests would come to pay a visit to him; they would seek his blessings, bow before him, and offer prayers and gifts to the Lord*1. In the small hermitage Lord Ram established at Chitrakoot, there used to be regular meetings where visiting sages and other religious men would sit around Lord Ram and have a discourse with him on various spiritual, metaphysical and religious subjects*2. In fact, a visit to Lord Ram's hermitage became a sort of a pilgrimage for pious souls who passed that way. A time came that Lord Ram decided to leave Chitrakoot because of the increasing numbers of visitors to his place, as the growing crowd robbed him of the serenity, loneliness, peace, quiet and tranquility of a forest life that he wished to live*3.

{Refer: *1=Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 134 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-2, 5-8 that precede it; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 135—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 137.

*2= Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 237 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it.

*3= Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 3.}

The idea is that Lord Ram had become so famous and revered in that part of the world that everyone whom Bharat met was acquainted with the Lord, and hence Bharat did not have to face the problem of learning about the Lord, about his welfare and well-being, as well as the Lord's exact location from those he met on the way to Chitrakoot.

Whoever Bharat met and asked him about Lord Ram, the person responded with a huge praise for the Lord, and then upon learning that Bharat was the Lord's brother who was going to the forest to meet him and plead with him to return home, they raised their hands and applauded Bharat and his glories too. This is endorsed by verse no. 1 that follows Doha no. 223 herein above.

³Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 221 along with Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it.]

जे जन कहहिं कुसल हम देखे । ते प्रिय राम लखन सम लेखे ॥ ७ ॥
एहि बिधि बूझत सबहि सुबानी । सुनत राम बनबास कहानी ॥ ८ ॥

jē jana kahahim kusala hama dēkhē. tē priya rāma lakhana sama lēkhē. 7.
ēhi bidhi būjhata sabahi subānī. sunata rāma banabāsa kahānī. 8.

If any person told Bharat about the welfare and well-being of Lord Ram, and that he had met or seen the Lord personally, Bharat felt so glad that he would treat that person as if he was an image of Lord Ram and Laxman themselves*.

[*This verse can be read as follows also: "When Bharat met anyone who told him that he has personally met Lord Ram, and that the Lord was happy and doing well, Bharat felt so glad that he treated that person with great affection as if by meeting the latter he was meeting Laxman and Lord Ram in person."] (7)

In this way, making polite enquiries about the Lord and his welfare from anyone he met on the way (ēhi bidhi būjhata sabahi subānī), and hearing about the many incidents related to Lord Ram and his life in the forest (sunata rāma banabāsa kahānī), Bharat cheerfully moved ahead on the path to the forest. (8)

दो०. तेहि बासर बसि प्रातहीं चले सुमिरि रघुनाथ ।
राम दरस की लालसा भरत सरिस सब साथ ॥ २२४ ॥

dōhā.

tēhi bāsara basi prātahim calē sumiri raghunātha.
rāma darasa kī lālasā bharata sarisa saba sātha. 224.

After making a halt for the day (in the evening), the party invoked the auspicious memory of Lord Ram the next morning and started for its onwards journey (to the forest). Like Bharat, everyone had a strong desire to have an auspicious sight of Lord Ram (as soon as it was possible).

[So therefore, as soon as the day broke, everyone got up and prepared to move quickly, without wasting any time. This verse also shows that there was great

enthusiasm in the people accompanying Bharat, and everyone was eager to reach Chitrakoot as soon as it was practically possible so that they can meet their beloved Lord Ram quickly.] (Doha no. 224)

चौ०. मंगल सगुन होहिं सब काहू । फरकहिं सुखद बिलोचन बाहू ॥ १ ॥
भरतहि सहित समाज उछाहू । मिलिहहिं रामु मिटिहि दुख दाहू ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

maṅgala saguna hōhiṁ saba kāhū. pharakahiṁ sukhada bilōcana bāhū. 1.
bharatahi sahita samāja uchāhū. milihahiṁ rāmu miṭihi dukha dāhū. 2.

Auspicious signs and omens occurred to everyone; their arms and eyes began fluttering¹ to indicate that good news was in the offing, and that their desire to meet Lord Ram would be fulfilled. (1)

These auspicious signs and good omens made Bharat and his party excited and jubilant as they indicated that they would soon meet Lord Ram, and therefore their worries, grief and sufferings are about to come to an end. (2)

[Note—¹It is believed that if any good is to happen then the right eyelids and arms of men flutter, while the opposite side, i.e. the left organs, of women flutter. Such fluttering of muscles is considered as good omen.

Bharat and his party are in the vicinity of Chitrakoot, hence these omens occurred to indicate that everything was fine and they would soon reach their destination to meet Lord Ram. In this context, refer to verse nos. 5-6 herein below.]

करत मनोरथ जस जियँ जाके । जाहिं सनेह सुराँ सब छाके ॥ ३ ॥
सिथिल अंग पग मग डगि डोलहिं । बिहबल बचन पेम बस बोलहिं ॥ ४ ॥

karata manōratha jasa jiyam̐ jākē. jāhiṁ sanēha surām̐ saba chākē. 3.
sithila aṅga paga maga ḍagi ḍōlahiṁ. bihabala bacana pēma basa bōlahiṁ. 4.

Everyone was immersed in one's own thoughts and fancies, and the people walked on eagerly and with agility as if intoxicated by the wine of affection for Lord Ram. (3)

Their bodies were numbed and weary with emotions; their legs tottered; and they were so overwhelmed with that now and then they would mutter something and say some incoherent words that seemed to be soaked in the virtue of love (for Lord Ram)¹. (4)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precede Doha no. 234 when Bharat had reached the vicinity of Chitrakoot.]

रामसखाँ तेहि समय देखावा । सैल सिरोमनि सहज सुहावा ॥ ५ ॥

जासु समीप सरित पय तीरा । सीय समेत बसहिं दोउ बीरा ॥ ६ ॥

rāmasakhām̐ tēhi samaya dēkhāvā. saila sirōmani sahaja suhāvā. 5.
jāsu samīpa sarita paya tīrā. sīya samēta basahim̐ dō'u bīrā. 6.

At that time (i.e. very soon), the friend of Lord Ram (i.e. Guha Nishad) pointed out the honourable mountain (or hill) that was naturally beautiful and pleasant to behold. (5)

Near it was the river with its pristine clear and sweet water, and on the banks of it dwelt the two brothers (Lord Ram and Laxman) along with Sita.¹ (6)

[Note—¹Bharat and his entourage had by this time arrived in the vicinity of the hills surrounding Chitrakoot. These undulating hills had natural beauty, and were very pleasant to behold. Sage Valmiki had praised these hills (or small mountains) of Chitrakoot when he advised Lord Ram to stay there. It was here that the Lord abided for a while before moving further down south to go into the denser parts of the forested land. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 132—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 133.

The natural beauty of Chitrakoot has been briefly narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 137—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 139.]

देखि करहिं सब दंड प्रनामा । कहि जय जानकि जीवन रामा ॥ ७ ॥
प्रेम मगन अस राज समाजू । जनु फिरि अवध चले रघुराजू ॥ ८ ॥

dēkhi karahim̐ saba daṇḍa pranāmā. kahi jaya jānaki jīvana rāmā. 7.
prēma magana asa rāja samājū. janu phiri avadha calē raghurājū. 8.

When the citizens saw the hills (where Lord Ram lived), all of them prostrated before the place with great reverence even as they raised their voice to praise the hills and invoke the blessings of Lord Ram, saying: ‘Glory to Lord Ram who is the life (i.e. most beloved) of Sita, the daughter of king Janak (jānaki jīvana rāmā)!’ (7)

The mere sight of the hills of Chitrakoot, and the certainty of them meeting Lord Ram now, was such an overwhelming feeling of joy and achievement for all the citizens that they felt very exhilarated as if Lord Ram was indeed returning home with them. (8)

दो०. भरत प्रेम तेहि समय जस तस कहि सकइ न सेषु ।
कबिहि अगम जिमि ब्रह्मसुखु अह मम मलिन जनेषु ॥ २२५ ॥
dōhā.

bharata prēmu tēhi samaya jasa tasa kahi saka'i na sēṣu.
kabihi agama jimi brahmasukhu aha mama malina janēṣu. 225.

Bharat's overwhelming sense of love and affection for Lord Ram, as well the ecstatic feeling he experienced during that time were so great that even Lord Seshnath (the legendary celestial Serpent with a thousand tongues) would not be able to describe it.

This sublime feeling of bliss, ecstasy, beatitude and satisfaction that Bharat experienced was so marked and profound that even wise poets and bards can't describe it, for it was like the feeling of profound bliss, ecstasy, beatitude and fulfillment that a spiritual seeker experiences when he realizes Brahm (i.e. attains enlightenment and realizes the ultimate Truth), something that is beyond comprehension of ordinary creatures who are engrossed in affairs of this humdrum material world of grossness¹. (Doha no. 225)

[Note—¹The idea is that the sort of joy, happiness, bliss and beatitude that Bharat experienced at that time were stupendous and of the highest order, like the one experienced by spiritual seekers when they have successfully achieved their goal of Brahm-realisation. It is a very sublime feeling that is not felt by ordinary creatures of this gross material world.]

चौ०. सकल सनेह सिथिल रघुबर कें । गए कोस दुइ दिनकर ढरकें ॥ १ ॥

जलु थलु देखि बसे निसि बीतें । कीन्ह गवन रघुनाथ पिरितें ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sakala sanēha sithila raghubara kēm. ga'ē kōsa du'i dinakara ḍharakēm. 1.
jalu thalu dēkhi basē nisi bītēm. kīnha gavana raghunātha piritēm. 2.

Everyone who accompanied Bharat were overwhelmed and intoxicated with emotions of love and affection for Lord Ram, the most exalted of the Raghus (raghubara).

By the end of that day, when the sun was about to set, they had traveled a distance of two Kosas (roughly four miles)¹. (1)

When they found a suitable place with availability of water and a ground fit to pitch camp for their stay for the night, the party halted.

At day-break the next morning, Lord Ram's dear brother Bharat (raghunātha piritēm) embarked on the next lap of the journey. (2)

[Note—¹Let us remember that it was a hilly and a rough terrain that was infrequently used. Besides this, there were other factors that slowed down the progress of the party: for instance, whenever Bharat met someone coming down the road he would stop and have a chat with him, asking the traveller if he had any news of Lord Ram; another factor was that the people were very tired after a long and arduous journey on foot from far away Ayodhya; then they were all emotionally drained which further sapped their energy and made them lose the initial vigour with which the party had started from Ayodhya. The cumulative effect of these factors was that by the time the party reached the vicinity of Chitrakoot, its progress was very slow, and during the course of the day they could cover only four miles approximately.]

उहाँ रामु रजनी अवसेषा । जागे सीयँ सपन अस देखा ॥ ३ ॥
 सहित समाज भरत जनु आए । नाथ बियोग ताप तन ताए ॥ ४ ॥
 सकल मलिन मन दीन दुखारी । देखीं सासु आन अनुहारी ॥ ५ ॥

uhām' rāmu rajanī avasēṣā. jāgē sīyam' sapana asa dēkhā. 3.
 sahita samāja bharata janu ā'ē. nātha biyōga tāpa tana tā'ē. 4.
 sakala malina mana dīna dukhārī. dēkhīm sāsu āna anuhārī. 5.

Meanwhile, here (in his hermitage or abode at Chitrakoot) Lord Ram got up during the last phase of the night. Sita had seen a dream during the night (and she told the Lord about it as soon as the couple woke up). (3)

In the dream that Sita had, she saw a vision of Bharat coming there with a large party of citizens, and everyone of them were sad, and the grief of separation from the Lord has had an adverse affect on their bodies as all of them seemed to be emaciated and weak. (4)

All appeared to be gloomy, distraught and saddened in their hearts. Further, to add to her consternation, she saw her mothers-in-law extremely remorseful and attired as if in a state of mourning.

[To wit, Sita had a vision that her mothers-in-law were dressed like widows, a shocking vision indeed, and that coupled with the saddened face of the citizens and the gloom that was writ large on Bharat's face portended an ill-omen, that something was seriously amiss.] (5)

सुनि सिय सपन भरे जल लोचन । भए सोचबस सोच बिमोचन ॥ ६ ॥
 लखन सपन यह नीक न होई । कठिन कुचाह सुनाइहि कोई ॥ ७ ॥
 अस कहि बंधु समेत नहाने । पूजि पुरारि साधु सनमाने ॥ ८ ॥

suni siya sapana bharē jala lōcana. bha'ē sōcabasa sōca bimōcana. 6.
 lakhana sapana yaha nīka na hō'ī. kaṭhina kucāha sunā'ihī kō'ī. 7.
 asa kahi bandhu samēta nahānē. pūji purāri sādhu sanamānē. 8.

Upon hearing about the dream which Sita had seen, Lord Ram's eyes were filled with tears¹. The Lord who dispels worries and troubles of others became worried and troubled himself, what a wonder and an irony of fate it was indeed!² (6)

The Lord turned to Laxman and expressed his apprehension: 'Laxman, this dream does not portend good. I feel someone would tell us a very bad news.' (7)

After that, Lord Ram and his brother (Laxman) took their morning baths and offered prayers to Lord Shiva (pūji purāri). Then they welcomed some holy men who had come to visit them (sādhu sanamānē). (8)

[Note—¹The dream meant that some grave development has taken place at home in Ayodhya. The way the mothers appeared dressed in the dream, i.e. like widows, meant that his father, king Dasrath, was no more.

When the Lord had departed from Ayodhya, he had seen the way the citizens had grieved and lamented for him, and he also remembered how he had to surreptitiously sneak out in the dark of night leaving them behind so that they don't pursue him, but would return home. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 81; (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 84—to Doha no. 86.}

Further, Bharat was expected to ascend the throne, but in the dream he was seen coming to the forest with a large retinue and huge detachment of the army. What does all this signify? Lord Ram pondered and became pensive.

²Indeed it was a matter of wonder that Lord Ram would become worried and troubled when he heard this news. The question is: Why was the Lord worried, and if it is true that he was all-knowing, as well as dispassionate and detached from everything in this gross mundane world, being the Supreme Being himself in the form of a human being, then what surprised and worried him, was he not supposed to know what was coming or going to happen, and why should he be upset so much that tears would well up in his eyes?

Well, the answer is simple and straightforward: Here the Supreme Being was in the form of a human being known as Lord Ram, and so he was playing the part of a 'human being' to perfection. Being a perfect and skilled 'actor' who lives his character while playing the role on the stage, the Lord had to act like an ordinary human being, and for the time being forget that he was the 'Supreme Being'. That is all there is to it. But for all those who could not see what played behind the curtain, the physical actions and deeds of Lord Ram, such as the present scene of him being worried and his eyes getting wet, make them wonder why it was so.]

छं०. सनमानि सुर मुनि बंदि बैठे उतर दिसि देखत भए । १ ।
 नभ धूरि खग मृग भूरि भागे बिकल प्रभु आश्रम गए ॥ २ ॥
 तुलसी उठे अवलोकि कारनु काह चित सचकित रहे । ३ ।
 सब समाचार किरात कोलन्हि आइ तेहि अवसर कहे ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

sanamāni sura muni bandi baiṭhē utara disi dēkhata bha'ē. 1.
 nabha dhūri khaga mṛga bhūri bhāgē bikala prabhu āśrama ga'ē. 2.
 tulasī uṭhē avalōki kārānu kāha cita sacakita rahē. 3.
 saba samācāra kirāta kōlanhi ā'i tēhi avasara kahē. 4.

After offering his obeisance and prayers to the gods and welcoming honoured guests such as sages and other holy men, the Lord sat down and looked in the northern direction. (Chanda line no. 1)

[And what did he see?] He saw a huge cloud of dust in the sky, and observed that animals and birds were running in hordes towards his hermitage¹. (Chanda line no. 2)

Tulsidas (the saintly poet who penned Ram Charit Manas) says that Lord Ram stood up to examine the cause of what he saw, and his mind appeared to be astonished as the Lord wondered what the sight means. (Chanda line no. 3)

Just at that moment, the Kirats and the Kols (the tribals who lived on the hills and constantly kept vigil on the surrounding areas of Chitrakoot in order to offer their service and protection to Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman) came in and informed the Lord about the developments. [To wit, these tribesmen came rushing in to tell Lord Ram that Bharat is approaching with a huge company.] (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹The dust was raised by the huge entourage of Bharat, that included not only the citizens but also a huge detachment of the army, carriers, mules, horses, chariots etc. walking on the dusty forest path.

The wild animals and birds were so terrified by the din and noise caused by the movement of such a large body of men that they thought some people have come to hunt them down. So terrified they were that these poor creatures ran towards the hermitage of Lord Ram as they had previously experienced that this place was very peaceful and secure for them, and they were also sure that Lord Ram would protect them from anyone out to kill them.]

सो०. सुनत सुमंगल बैन मन प्रमोद तन पुलक भर ।

सरद सरोरुह नैन तुलसी भरे सनेह जल ॥ २२६ ॥

sōraṭhā.

sunata sumaṅgala baina mana pramōda tana pulaka bhara.
sarada sarōruha naina tulasī bharē sanēha jala. 226.

No sooner Lord Ram heard these auspicious words from the Kols and the Kirats (that Bharat was coming to the Lord's hermitage with a huge company), but the Lord became exhilarated and extremely happy so much so that his body was thrilled and tears of love and remembrance (of Bharat as well as devoted citizens) filled his eyes¹—as if dew drops had appeared on the petals of a lotus flower during the autumn season. (Sortha no. 226)

[Note—¹We have read just a while ago that when Lord Ram heard about the dream of Sita, he had become pensive and worried, and also that tears had come in his eyes—apropos: Chaupai line no. 6 herein above. But now we read that when the Kols and Kirats came and told him about the approaching party, the Lord felt very happy—apropos: Chanda line no. 4 herein above.

The reason for the Lord feeling worried earlier, when he heard about the dream in which Sita saw her mothers-in-law attired as widows, was that it meant his father, king Dasrath, had died.

But the news that the Kols and Kirats brought made the Lord extremely happy because the news meant that he would have an opportunity to see his beloved brother Bharat as well as his devoted citizens once again. It ought to be remarked here that though it is not specifically said that the Kols and Kirats informed Lord Ram about 'Bharat' coming to meet him, but it is understood that they did so because they had met Bharat themselves earlier*1, and so it is obvious that they would inform Lord

Ram about Bharat while telling him in detail about the incoming party. {*1=Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 224.}]

चौ०. बहुरि सोचबस भे सियरवनू । कारन कवन भरत आगवनू ॥ १ ॥

एक आइ अस कहा बहोरी । सेन संग चतुरंग न थोरी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

bahuri sōcabasa bhē siyaravanū. kārana kavana bharata āgavanū. 1.
ēka ā'i asa kahā bahōrī. sēna saṅga caturaṅga na thōrī. 2.

After an initial feeling of happiness and joy upon hearing the news brought by the Kols and the Kirats, Lord Ram, the beloved husband of Sita (siyaravanū), once again became thoughtful, wondering about the reason for Bharat coming to meet him in the forest. (1)

Meanwhile, someone else (i.e. some other Kol or Kirat) came in and informed the Lord that a huge army consisting of its four wings was also coming along (with Bharat and the citizens)¹. (2)

[Note—¹The new informant told Lord Ram that Bharat was also accompanied by a huge army consisting of its four wings—viz, the infantry, chariots, cavalry and elephants. Not only this, there were countless carriers bearing palanquins, and mules carrying supplies. In brief, it appeared that Bharat was accompanied by a large numbers of citizens as well as a huge army as if he was going on an expedition. This bit of news worried Lord Ram.] (2)

सो सुनि रामहि भा अति सोचू । इत पितु बच इत बंधु सकोचू ॥ ३ ॥

भरत सुभाउ समुझि मन माहीं । प्रभु चित हित थिति पावत नाहीं ॥ ४ ॥

sō suni rāmaḥi bhā ati sōcū. ita pitu baca ita bandhu sakōcū. 3.
bharata subhā'u samujhi mana māhīm. prabhu cita hita thiti pāvata nāhīm. 4.

When Lord Ram heard this (i.e. when he learnt about the army accompanying Bharat) he became thoughtful and worried. On the one hand there was the word of his father, and on the other hand he had his brother (Bharat)¹. (3)

When the Lord considered the nature, character and virtues of Bharat, he found it difficult to console his mind and find a way to anchor his distraught heart². (4)

[Note—¹Lord Ram was literally on the horns of a dilemma. He was bound by the orders of his father that he had to live like a hermit in the forest for fourteen years. This meant that he cannot go back to Ayodhya, and also that he must not raise his arms against innocent persons because a hermit is not expected to fight and shed blood unnecessarily, especially engage in a battle with his own brother, his kin and countrymen. So, in case Bharat decides to challenge Lord Ram for a duel, what would he do? Should he yield, or should he fight Bharat?

After all, why did Bharat bring an army with him? It ought to be noted here that this episode shows us how a person loses balance of thoughts when he is faced with uncertainties. The reason why Bharat brought the army along was to provide security to the large entourage that accompanied him, as it included his mothers, the queens, his guru, sage Vasistha and his wife Arundhati, as well as courtiers, ministers, senior citizens, Brahmins and the common men of Ayodhya. Army was absolutely necessary for security and protection against robbers and thugs and wild savages that way laid travellers, attacking and killing them. But surely and certainly, this army was not at all meant to fight with Lord Ram!

Hence, it was out of practical reasons and necessities that Bharat brought the army with him.

²The Lord also knew how much Bharat loved him and was devoted to him. So then, if Bharat fell down at the Lord's feet and clasps it firmly, vowing not to leave them unless the Lord promises to return home inspite of what their father had ordered, what would the Lord do then? Obviously, the Lord can't talk rudely with Bharat and deal sternly with him, for that would be completely unacceptable, and against Lord Ram's nature and reputation. How can Lord Ram unceremoniously turn Bharat away; how can he deny Bharat the permission to enter his hermitage?

Such ethical questions and moral dilemmas churned inside Lord Ram's mind and left his heart in a quandary.]

समाधान तब भा यह जाने । भरतु कहे महुँ साधु सयाने ॥ ५ ॥

लखन लखेउ प्रभु हृदयँ खभारू । कहत समय सम नीति बिचारू ॥ ६ ॥

samādhāna taba bhā yaha jānē. bharatu kahē mahum' sādhu sayānē. 5.
lakhana lakhē'u prabhu hr̥dayam' khabhārū. kahata samaya sama nīti bicārū.
6.

Sooner rather than later, Lord Ram found a solution for his dilemma which ended his worries, for he realized that Bharat had an immaculate character, was extremely good natured, and very devoted and obedient to the Lord, so much so that he is called a very pious and saintly soul by the community of saints and pious people.

[So therefore, thought Lord Ram, there was nothing to worry with respect to Bharat: He would do nothing that would embarrass the Lord; he would never disobey the Lord; he would never impose his will on the Lord; he would never do anything that would bring infamy and dishonour to either himself or Lord Ram. This was a very reassuring thought, and it calmed the Lord down.] (5)

Meanwhile, when Laxman observed that Lord Ram had become thoughtful and pensive (after the news of Bharat's arrival came in), he (Laxman) thought over the matter himself and spoke to the Lord politely in accordance with the need of the circumstances.

[To wit, Laxman wished to reassure the Lord that he need not worry at all, for he can rely upon Laxman to take care of any unforeseen situation.] (6)

बिनु पूछें कछु कहउँ गोसाईं । सेवकु समयँ न ढीठ ढिठाई ॥ ७ ॥

तुम्ह स॒र्बग्य॑ सिरोमनि स्वामी । आपनि समुझि कहउँ अनुगामी ॥ ८ ॥

binu pūchēm kachu kaha'um' gōsā'īm. sēvaku samayam' na dhīṭha dhīṭhā'īm.

7.

tumha sarbagya sirōmani svāmī. āpani samujhi kaha'um' anugāmī. 8.

Laxman said to Lord Ram: 'Oh my Lord, I beg your pardon for speaking without your permission, but if the circumstances so demand, as it happens to be at present, a servant's impertinence and his speaking out of turn are not to be regarded as improper and imprudent¹. (7)

I understand that thou knowest everything as thou art all-knowing and most wise, but still, as thy loyal and faithful servant, I feel obliged that I must let thee know what I think of in my mind (for indeed, a true servant ought naught to conceal aught from his Lord). (8)

[Note—¹Laxman essentially says that though it is not proper for him to say anything to Lord Ram without the Lord seeking his opinion on any matter, but the present situation seems to be grave, and it is not the time to remain bounded and restrained by formalities and protocols. It was his (Laxman's) duty to serve Lord Ram and ensure that the Lord is happy and cheerful, but he finds himself obliged to speak because he has observed that the Lord has become worried and pensive upon hearing the news of Bharat's arrival with a huge entourage that includes the army. The call of duty comes first and foremost, and it is his responsibility to see that his Lord (Sri Ram) does not have to worry about anything.

And therefore, said Laxman, though he may be violating norms that a servant ought to observe, which is not to say anything to his Lord unless he is asked to give his advice on any matter, yet keeping silent would also not be proper at this crucial juncture.]

दो०. नाथ सुहृद सुठि सरल चित सील सनेह निधान ।

सब पर प्रीति प्रतीति जियँ जानिअ आपु समान ॥ २२७ ॥

dōhā.

nātha suhr̥da suṭhi sarala cita sīla sanēha nidhāna.

saba para prīti pratīti jiyam' jāni'a āpu samāna. 227.

[Laxman continued—] 'Oh Lord, thou art of a kind, gracious, compassionate and merciful heart, and art amiable and affable by thine inherent nature, as well as art simple and straightforward, as thou hast no trace of conceit and deceit in thee. Further, thou art an abode of the virtues of goodness, good manners, courteousness, affection and love for all.

Indeed, thou hast shown faith and trust on everyone, for thou always treat everyone alike, and regard everyone to be as free from falsehood and deceit as thine own self¹. (Doha no. 227)

[Note—¹In essence, Laxman tells Lord Ram that he thinks Bharat has no ill-will against him, and it is so because the Lord has a simple and pious heart who shows affection for everyone. The Lord thinks that since he has not done any harm to Bharat, and on the contrary has voluntarily left the throne vacant so that Bharat can occupy it, so Bharat won't think of causing any harm to the Lord too. But this is because the Lord has a very simple and affectionate nature who sees a friend even in his arch enemy; the Lord does not realize that everyone is not like him.

With this preamble, Laxman would go on to warn Lord Ram that he has a premonition that Bharat has a bad intention in coming to the forest, and that he does not think that Bharat will reciprocate the gesture of goodness, goodwill and brotherly love that the Lord had shown to him, but that something serious, and contrary to what the Lord imagines and expects, seems to be in the offing. This apprehension of Laxman is explicitly articulated by him in the verses that follow herein below {apropos: Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 228—to Doha no. 229}.

चौ०. बिषई जीव पाइ प्रभुताई । मूढ़ मोह बस होहिं जनाई ॥ १ ॥
 भरतु नीति रत साधु सुजाना । प्रभु पद प्रेमु सकल जगु जाना ॥ २ ॥
 तेऊ आजु राम पदु पाई । चले धरम मरजाद मेटाई ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

biṣa'ī jīva pā'i prabhutā'ī. mūrḥa mōha basa hōhiṁ janā'ī. 1.
 bharatu nīti rata sādhu sujānā. prabhu pada prēmu sakala jagu jānā. 2.
 tē'ū āju rāma padu pā'ī. calē dharama marajāda mēṭā'ī. 3.

[Said Laxman—] ‘Those creatures who are prone to falling prey to the temptations of sensual pleasures and enjoyment of the material charms of this gross world (biṣa'ī jīva) are very easily deluded, for such fools (mūrḥa mōha basa) fall astray from the path of auspiciousness, righteousness, probity and propriety if they get an opportunity to acquire power and authority (pā'i prabhutā'ī -- hōhiṁ janā'ī), for they think themselves to be above everything and immune to all repercussions. (1)

It is no doubt that Bharat is very diligent in upholding the laws of good conduct, probity and propriety (bharatu nīti rata). He is also saintly and a thorough gentleman indeed (sādhu sujānā).

Further, the whole world knows that (sakala jagu jānā) he has great affection for the august feet of the Lord (i.e. Lord Ram) (prabhu pada prēmu). (2)

It is such an irony that the same Bharat has today thrown all caution to the wind by sweeping aside and transgressing all norms of good conduct, all sense of rule, probity and propriety, once he has acquired the stature of being the King of Ayodhya with its implied position of power and authority. (3)

कुटिल कुबंधु कुअवसरु ताकी । जानि राम बनबास एकाकी ॥ ४ ॥
 करि कुमंत्रु मन साजि समाजू । आए करै अकंटक राजू ॥ ५ ॥
 कोटि प्रकार कलपि कुटिलाई । आए दल बटोरि दोउ भाई ॥ ६ ॥

kuṭila kubandhu ku'avasaru tākī. jāni rāma banabāsa ēkākī. 4.
 kari kumantru mana sāji samājū. ā'ē karai akaṇṭaka rājū. 5.
 kōṭi prakāra kalapi kuṭilā'ī. ā'ē dala baṭōri dō'u bhā'ī. 6.

The wicked and evil-hearted brother seized the opportunity when he learnt that Lord Ram was all alone in the forest. (4)

So he devised an evil mechanism in his mind, collected a large group of citizens, and has come here with the intention that he would henceforth rule over the kingdom unchallenged and unopposed.

[To wit, Bharat secretly wishes to fight and either kill or capture and imprison Lord Ram, the only one who he fears could pose a serious challenge to him by claiming the right to the throne once the period of fourteen years ended. But he kept this evil scheme close to his heart and pretended before the citizens that he is going to the forest to bring Lord Ram back. Why, does he not know that the Lord won't return before the designated time period of fourteen years is over, for the Lord is true to his word? So therefore, there is no other reason for Bharat to show such haste and come to the forest with a well-armed army but to get rid of his only opponent and challenger to the throne, viz. Lord Ram.] (5)

Verily indeed, harbouring a nefarious design in their hearts and having countless ambitions of various kinds, the two brothers (Bharat and Shatrughan) assembled a huge army and have come to the forest with ill-intentions, to give shape to their evil scheme. (6)

जौं जियँ होति न कपट कुचाली । केहि सोहाति रथ बाजि गजाली ॥ ७ ॥
 भरतहि दोसु देइ को जाएँ । जग बौराइ राज पदु पाएँ ॥ ८ ॥

jauṁ jiyam' hōti na kapaṭa kucālī. kēhi sōhāti ratha bāji gajālī. 7.
 bharatahi dōsu dē'i kō jā'ēm'. jaga baurā'i rāja padu pā'ēm'. 8.

Say, had they no evil thoughts and any sort of vile mechanism lurking somewhere in their crooked hearts, why would they show off a well-armed army with war chariots, horses, elephants (and infantry). (7)

Actually, why would one blame Bharat for harbouring such evil ambitions, for it is a common knowledge that the entire world (i.e. every living being, without exception) gets deluded once it gets access to unbridled power and authority? (8)

दो०. ससि गुर तिय गामी नघुषु चढ़ेउ भूमिसुर जान ।
 लोक बेद तेँ बिमुख भा अधम न बेन समान ॥ २२८ ॥
 dōhā.

sasi gura tiya gāmī naghuṣu caṛhē'u bhūmisura jāna.
 lōka bēda tēm bimukha bhā adhama na bēna samāna. 228.

[Giving examples to support his observations, that power and authority makes everyone deluded, wild and mad with arrogance so much so that the creature throws all caution to the wind, and behaves most impertinently, impudently, irrationally and rashly, without bothering about the consequences of his actions, Laxman makes the following observation—]

‘The Moon God was so rash with passion that he committed adultery with the wife of his guru, sage Brihaspati¹; king Nahush became so arrogant and haughty that he mounted a palanquin that was carried by Brahmins on their backs²; and king Vena was so vile and void of wisdom that he not only debunked, derided and ridiculed the ancient scriptures such as the Vedas but also opposed established traditions and norms of good behaviour coming down through the ages³.’ (Doha no. 228)

[Note—¹The story of the Moon God: Sage Brihaspati (represented by the planet Jupiter) is the guru of all the Gods, including the Moon God. Once upon a time, the Moon God performed a fire sacrifice called the “Rajsuya Yagya”. During that religious function, the sage came to attend with his wife named Tara (pronounced Tārā), and when the Moon God saw her beauty, he got very infatuated with her so much that he forcibly took her away to have a sexual relationship with her. Sage Brihaspati appealed to Indra, the King of Gods, who tried to persuade the Moon God to give Tara back to the sage, but the latter refused. A tremendous battle followed in which the demons took sides with the Moon God. Ultimately, the old patriarch Brahma, the Creator, intervened, and he managed to prevail upon the Moon God to return Tara to her rightful husband, sage Brihaspati. The relationship between the Moon God and Tara produced an off-spring called ‘Buddha’ (represent by the planet Mercury). This is why Buddha is called the ‘son of the Moon God’.

Snatching a guru’s wife and having a sexual relationship with her is totally unacceptable by any means. This unpardonable sin was committed by the Moon God due to his rashness and lascivious nature. That is why the Moon is always associated with desires, passions and love.

²The story of king Nahush: There is a legendary story how once sage Agastya had converted king Nahush as a serpent. The story goes that once Indra, the king of Gods, was demoted from his exalted stature due to the curse of killing some Brahmins, and king Nahush had taken his place. Nahush lustfully eyed the consort of Indra, named Indrani. To punish him, Brihaspati, the moral preceptor of Gods, devised a stratagem by which Indrani requested Nahush to come to her riding a palanquin that was never used by anyone earlier. Overcome and blinded by passions, Nahush forgot everything about propriety and probity, and he summoned all the great sages and seers of the time to act as carriers or bearers of his palanquin. Humble sages and seers did not mind because Nahush was now elevated to the stature of Indra, the king of Gods. Nahush was so eager to reach heaven as quickly as possible that he kept prodding and scolding these sages to walk faster. Enraged, astonished and peeved at this nonsense being perpetrated by the haughty king, sage Agastya had then cursed him to become a great and poisonous snake. This story appears in Mahabharat, Anushaashan Parva, 99-100.

King Nahush’s example is often cited to show how stubbornness, adamancy and an arrogant nature more often than not backfires, and is detrimental to one’s own good well-being. It is cited in Tulsidas’ epic Ram Charit Manas where Lord Ram has

used it as an example to try and dissuade Sita to abandon her determination to accompany him to the forest, and instead heed his advice to stay home and serve her mother-in-law (Kaushalya) in deference to his wishes, for if she does not heed him she would get nothing but misery and pain in the bargain. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 61.}

Laxman too cites king Nahush's example here in this Doha to say how arrogance and haughtiness makes a person act wildly without thinking the evilness he is perpetrating.

³The story of king Ven appears in Srimad Bhagwat, 4/13-15, and in Mahabharat, Shanti Parva, Canto 59. He tried to eliminate or destroy 'Dharma' misusing his powers. But by the curse of sages he died while Dharma survived.

The story of king Ven in brief is as follows. In the clan of Dhruv, the great devotee of Lord Vishnu, there was a king named Anga. His wife was Sunitha, the daughter of Mritu, the God of death. Ven was their son. Since he was a grandson of Mritu, he inherited negative traits from his mother, and became cruel and merciless since birth. He used to kill innocent humble animals in the forest, and mercilessly beat his companions for no rhyme or reason. His father Anga was extremely frustrated and peeved at his misdeeds, and tried his best to correct Ven, but failed. So one day he renounced the kingdom and went incognito to the forest to become a hermit. The royal courtiers were left with no choice but to anoint Ven to the throne. Instead of having any guilt that he was the cause of his father going to the forest and mending his ways, Ven became more arrogant and reckless once he was made the king.

He issued a proclamation that he is to be worshipped as a living God, arguing that a king takes the care of his subjects on behalf of the Lord God and therefore is an incarnate God. All the Gods lived in the body of the king and act through him. So henceforth, all his subjects were required by royal mandate to offer all their worship only to him, and not to any other deity. The elders in the kingdom did their best to make him come to senses, but he was so stupid and stubborn that he paid no heed.

The sages and saints of the time determined that he was a living Satan, and so they destroyed him by using their curse by way of an angry deep-throated guttural sound of 'hum' which was so fierce that it instantly killed Ven by its fiery spell that sucked the life out of his body.

His mother Sunitha however managed to keep his body intact (in the way mummies are preserved in today's world) by employing her mystical powers. Since the throne became vacant as Ven had no sons, and the tradition was that only someone who was a direct descendant of the king was to ascend the throne, the elders churned the left thigh of the embalmed body of Ven to produce an off spring. From this churning was born Nishad. From him emerged the tribal clan who hunted and ate flesh.

Then these elders churned Ven's arms, and from it was produced the great king Prithu after whom the earth was named as 'Prithivi'. His wife was Archi.

The various factors determining the destiny of the soul of Ven were such that he was destined to become a king. In fact, he was born in a royal family and eventually ascended the throne. But unfortunately he did not put the golden opportunities to good and proper use, and so had to suffer infamy and death.

The example of king Ven, his arrogance and impertinent attitude that made him opposed to the Vedas and established traditions, ridiculing and deriding them, which led to his downfall from a high position, has been cited by Laxman to highlight

how power and authority often leads a person to become rash and impudent in his behaviour that boomerangs on him.]

चौ०. सहसबाहु सुरनाथु त्रिसंकू । केहि न राजमद दीन्ह कलंकू ॥ १ ॥
 भरत कीन्ह यह उचित उपाऊ । रिपु रिन रंच न राखब काऊ ॥ २ ॥
 caupāī.

sahasabāhu suranāthu trisaṅkū. kēhi na rājamada dīnha kalaṅkū. 1.
 bharata kīnha yaha ucita upā'ū. ripu rina rañca na rākhaba kā'ū. 2.

[Laxman has cited three examples in Doha no. 228 herein above, and now in this verse no. 1 he cites three more as follows—]

‘Say, Sahastrabahu (the king with a thousand arms)¹, Indra (the king of gods)², as well as king Trishanku (who was one of the ancestors of king Dasrath of Ayodhya)³—who has not fallen pray to the temptations of committing grave sins and having their reputation tarnished and scarred forever due to the arrogance and rashness that corrupts their wisdom due to their having acquired power and authority. (1)

Bharat thinks that he is doing the right thing, because there is the adage that says that one should not treat an enemy and debt lightly (because no one can be certain when they would become so formidable at a later date that it would be impossible to overcome them)⁴. (2)

[Note—¹The story of Sahastrabahu: There was once a thousand-armed Kshatriya (warrior class) king known as ‘Sahastraarjun’ or ‘Arjun with a thousand hands’. He was the son of king Kritvirya whose kingdom was known as Anup; its capital city was known as Maahismati and it was situated on the southern bank of river Narmada.

In his early life he was a very righteous and conscientious person, a man of upright thoughts and noble conduct. After the death of his father when the court ministers wished to anoint him on the throne of the kingdom, he refused, saying: ‘Kingdom leads a king to hell if he cannot live upto the expectations of his subjects and rule according to the principles of Dharma (righteousness and probity). The main source of income of a king is ‘tax collected from his subjects’, but if this tax is collected in an improper way, and if it is not utilized for the welfare of the subjects of the kingdom in accordance with the principles of Dharma which say that the main use of state revenue is to ensure that traders are given all facilities and protection for carrying out legitimate trade, are not looted by thieves, the subjects of the kingdom are given due protection and their interests are always kept ahead of everything else, and so on and so forth. So unless I acquire such powers and abilities by doing Tapa (penance), I will not accept the throne.’

When Sahastrabahu said this, the great sage Garg advised him that if he indeed wishes to do Tapa and acquire mytical powers to rule the vast kingdom in accordance to Dharma then he should go and serve Lord Dattatreya, an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. Dattatreya lived in a cave of Mt. SahyaParvat and did Tapa there (Markandeya Puran, Canto 18). So, Sahastrabahu went to Lord Dattatreya and began serving him diligently for a long period of ten thousand years.

According to Padma Puran, Srusti Khand, Canto 12, when Dattatreya was pleased with his service and austerities, he granted him four boons: (i) First, the king asked for one thousand arms. (ii) Second, he wished that no one in his kingdom would even dare to think in an unrighteous and sinful way. (iii) Third, he wanted to conquer the whole earth and rule over it. (iv) Fourth, that if he has to die then it must be in the battle-field at the hands of a warrior who is superior to him in every way.

According to Markandey Puran, Canto 18, verse nos. 14-18, the king was granted ten boons as follows: (i) The powers and authority to rule over his subjects without acquiring sins. (ii) The ability to know the thoughts of others. (iii) No one should be able to face him in the battle-field (i.e. he should become invincible). (iv) During a war he should have a thousand arms so as to fight his opponent with all of them at once. [This is also mentioned in Harivansha Puran, Canto 33, verse no. 14.] (v) He should have unhindered access to all places in the sky, water, earth, mountains and the nether world. (vi) If he has to die then it should be at the hands of someone stronger than him. (vii) If by chance he goes astray and falls on the wrong path, then he must have a chance to get good advice and company of saintly persons (i.e. he must be given an opportunity to mend his ways). (viii) He must have illustrious persons as his guests so that he can serve them and get their blessings. (ix) His wealth should never diminish even after liberal charities and giving of alms regularly; there should be no shortage of wealth in his kingdom. (x) The virtue of Bhakti (having devotion for Lord God) should be firm and perpetual in him.

In Mahabharat, Van Parva, Canto 115, verse no. 12, it is said that by the grace of Dattatreya the king acquired an air-plane made of gold; that he ruled over the entire earth; and that no one could stop his chariot. He was a great Emperor who conquered the whole world and made liberal charities. He is also regarded as a great scholar of Tantra Shastra.

He was so powerful and mighty that when he bathed in the ocean and thrashed it with his thousand arms, he could turn the tide backwards. He would splash the water so heavily that marine creatures were tossed into the air like ninepins. [Brahm-Vaivarta Puran, Ganesh Khand, Canto 23-27.]

But the Laws of Creation are such that every good thing has to come to an end one day; nothing is eternal and permanent in this mortal gross world. This also applied to Sahastrabahu. As time passed, he became extremely haughty and cruel. He started subjugating even the Gods so as to remove all challenges to his authority and power. It is said that he ruled for eighty-five thousand years before he was killed by sage Parashuram.

Once he was asked by the Fire God for alms, and the noble king could not refuse. The Fire God used this grant to burn everything and cause havoc everywhere, because he was certain that Sahastrabahu would not stop him. During this burning spree, the Fire destroyed the hermitage of sage Aapava (who was later on known as sage Vasistha according to Brahm Puran during its description of the race of Yayaati). The sage cursed king Sahastrabahu that his arms, relying upon whose strength the Fire God had destroyed his hermitage and was wreaking havoc on earth, would be cut by sage Parashuram. [Refer: Mahabharat, Shanti Parva, Canto 49, verse nos. 35-45; and Padma Puran, Srusti Khand, Canto 12.]

One day, he was wandering along the shore of the ocean and out of his pride and haughtiness he covered it with thousands of arrows. The Ocean assumed a form and appeared before him to plead that he stop showering arrows into the water as all the marine creatures that live in the water would die. Sahastrabahu accepted the prayer but asked the Ocean to tell him about someone who could face him in battle, as

he was itching for a face-off with anyone who could claim to be stronger than him as he wished to conquer the opponent and become an unchallenged warrior in this world. The Ocean told him to go sage Jamdagni whose son Parashuram would be fit opponent for him and would welcome him in battle. [Refer: Mahabharat, Ashwamegh Parva, Canto 29.]

Such was Sahastraarjun's sense of ego and pride that he could not bear that someone stronger be there on earth in his presence. So he collected his huge army and went to the hermitage of sage Jamdagni.

The sage duly welcomed the king and extended warm hospitality to him. Sahastraarjun was however astonished at the lavish way the forest-dwelling hermit had entertained him. So he wanted to know the reason. Upon finding out that the sage managed to do this miracle because he possessed a divine cow known as 'Kamdhenu' or Kapila cow which could produce anything desired in an instant, the greedy king was filled with jealousy. Driven by avarice and rapacity, he demanded that the sage give this cow to him. Obviously Jamdagni refused. So the king forcefully snatched the cow from him and in the ensuing tussle he killed Jamdagni.

At that time, Jamdagni's brave son Parashuram was not there. When he returned, home he found his mother grieving. Coming to know of the reason, he immediately took the vow that he will eliminate all the Kshatriya kings from the surface of the earth by killing all of them. His mother had beaten her chest twenty-one times as a sign of mourning, so he declared that he will continue to wipe out the Kshatriya kings for an equal number of times, i.e. for twenty-one generations.

He comforted his mother and attacked Sahastraarjun, severed all his thousand arms with his battle-axe and then killed him. [This story is narrated in Mahabharat, Ashwamegha Parva, Canto 29.]

Extremely peeved by the Kshatriya race to which this king belonged, Parashuram vowed to eliminate the entire race from the surface of the earth as a revenge for the killing of his father. This was the reason why Parashuram had fought and killed thousands of Kshatriya to avenge the killing of his father by Sahastraarjun.

The story of Sahastrabahu and how Ravana, the king of the demon race who ruled in Lanka, was humiliated by him, is narrated in Valmiki's Ramayana, Uttar Kand, Canto nos. 31-33; Veda Vyas' Adhyatma Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Canto 2, verse nos. 55-57; and in Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto 13, verse nos. 90-95.

Briefly it is as follows: Sahastrabahu was the son of Kritvirya and the king of Mahishmati situated on the banks of river Narmada. By the blessings of sage Dattatreya he could get a thousand arms when he so desired. One day when he was enjoying himself with his ladies and mistresses in the river, Ravana had too gone there to offer worship to Lord Shiva. Ravana's attendants had collected flowers for offering to Lord Shiva. In the meantime, Sahastrabahu, who was showing off his majesty to impress the women, had used his thousand arms to block the flow of water in the river, which therefore flooded the banks and flowed upstream. The flowers that Ravana's attendants had collected for worship were washed away, which gravely annoyed Ravana as it disrupted his worship. On learning the cause of this flood, Ravana immediately went to challenge Sahastrabahu and started a fierce battle with his soldiers. Upon learning that Ravana has destroyed the entire army, Sahastrabahu himself came to face him. A severe battle ensued. As soon as the chief commander of the demon army, named Prahasta, fell, the rest of the demons fled; and then followed a one-to-one duel between Ravana and Sahastrabahu. These two mighty warriors used massive war-maces to hit each other. Finally, Sahastrabahu hit Ravana so hard that he

tottered and swooned, and was so dazed that he sat down to recover himself. Seizing the moment, Sahastrabahu captured Ravana and held him tight in his thousand arms, using these arms like ropes to ensnare him so firmly that Ravana could not wriggle out. After this, Sahastrabahu brought Ravana to his capital city and imprisoned him like an ordinary prisoner of war. Later on, sage Pulastya went to plead with Sahastrabahu, and he not only succeeded in getting Ravana released but also in forging a friendship between the two. {This version is according to Valmiki's Ramayana, Uttar Kand, Canto nos. 31-33.}

The example of Sahastrabahu has been cited by Laxman to stress how power and authority often makes a person very wild and haughty so much so that he begins to act rashly that leads to his ruin.

²The story of Indra: Indra, like the Moon God, too is very lascivious by nature. He had violated the modesty of sage Gautam's wife, Ahilya, and as a curse got his body filled with a thousand holes resembling chicken pox. That is why Indra is also called by the name 'Sahastraaksha', which literally means to have thousand eyes. He is called so because his whole body is covered by thousands of holes resembling the marks left on one's body after chicken-pox or some serious skin disease. He had got them as a result of a curse by sage Gautam to punish him for being sexually pervert as he had the vile temerity of having attempted sex with the sage's loyal wife in his absence by employing deceit. The lecherous Indra had assumed the physical body of the sage to satisfy his lust, but was caught by the sage. So the sage cursed him to have a thousand holes in his body. These 'holes' represented the female vagina, and the curse was in the form of sarcastic curse on Indra so that now onwards he would be able to see a woman's sexual organs spread all over his own body with thousands of eyes instead of only two to satisfy his lust and perversions. It was also intended to tell the world in a symbolic manner about the punishment that one gets by being excessively lustful in the sense that one instance of lecherousness would create thousands of horrible spots that would taint a man's character and personality forever, no matter how socially established or well-placed he may be. After all, Indra was a king of Gods, and one can imagine his discomfiture that he would have to remain with a pot-holed and scarred body for the rest of his life.

Ahilya was however liberated from her curse by Lord Ram when he touched her stone-like form by his feet while going to Janakpur with sage Vishwamitra to attend the bow-breaking ceremony of Sita that would lead to the Lord getting married to her. {Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 9-12 and Chand line nos. 116 that precede Doha no. 211.}

The sinful way Indra acted by outraging the modesty of sage Gautam's wife Ahilya by using deceit shows how lascivious he was. In Tulsidas' Ram Charit Manas, Laxman uses Indra's instance to stress how power and authority often leads to wild behaviour and makes a person lose all wisdom and a sense of propriety.

³The story of king Trishanku: He was one of the great kings of the Raghu dynasty. Once he asked his Guru sage Vashistha to perform a fire sacrifice so that he can go to heaven with his physical body instead of in a spirit form after death. Vashistha told him that it is impossible and violative of the laws of Nature. Trishanku then approached the sage's sons and asked them to do the fire sacrifice to fulfill his wishes by offering them the incentive of the post of royal priesthood to replace their father Vashistha. They also expressed their inability to do so, but sage took umbrage at this selfish and infidel mentality of Trishanku and cursed him to become a Chandal, a

person of low birth. Trishanku sought the help of another sage, Vishwamitra, who had a running feud with Vashishtha of one-upmanship, each claiming to be more exalted, senior, learned and powerful than the other; they were always at loggerheads with each other. Trishanku requested Viswamitra to send him bodily to heaven, which the sage agreed to do and actually managed to accomplish by the dint of his mystical prowess acquired by doing penances and austerities. But it violated the laws of Nature and creation, besides causing insult to Guru Vashistha.

So, Trishanku was pushed out of the heaven, and he came down tumbling upside down towards the mortal world. Peeved, sage Viswamitra attempted to resend him to heaven, while the curse of Vashistha acted as a heavy millstone around Trishanku's neck, pulling him downwards. The net effect was that two formidable forces started acting simultaneously upon Trishanku, one force represented by sage Viswamitra's penances and austerities pushed him up, and the other one representing sage Vashistha's curse pulled him down. Since he was pushed down from heaven because of the Guru's curse, Trishanku came down tumbling towards the earth head first, but was held in mid air by the upward thrust of his other patron sage Viswamitra who was determined not to let him come down. So he became dangled in the middle of the sky between the heaven and the earth, upside down!

This incident is cited in Gowami Tulsidas' book "Dohawali" in its verse no. 324. The story of Trishanku is narrated in Valmiki Ramayana, 1/57-60 too.

Laxman uses this instance to emphasize how arrogance and too outlandish and impractical ambitions lead to a person's ruin.

⁴Laxman says that Bharat has decided to get rid of Lord Ram as he treats the Lord as his only opponent who could raise his claim to the throne later on at the end of the period of fourteen years of forest exile that his father, king Dasrath, has mandated. In order to pre-empt this from happening, Bharat thought to wage a war on Lord Ram while the Lord is alone in the forest, without the privilege of getting any help from an army, something that Bharat has. So Bharat thinks it is wiser to nip the bud before it blooms into a flower.

In this context, Laxman cites two sayings: viz. (i) an enemy and (ii) a debt ought not to be taken lightly, for one day they would become so huge that it would then be difficult to tackle them.

This observation of Laxman is an extension of what he has said a little while ago in Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 228 herein above.]

एक कीन्हि नहिं भरत भलाई । निदरे रामु जानि असहाई ॥ ३ ॥
समुझि परिहि सोउ आजु बिसेषी । समर सरोष राम मुखु पेखी ॥ ४ ॥

ēka kīnhi nahim̐ bharata bhalā'ī. nidarē rāmu jāni asahā'ī. 3.
samujhi parihi sō'u āju bisēṣī. samara sarōṣa rāma mukhu pēkhī. 4.

So though Bharat seems to be acting smart and in accordance with the proverb cited above (in verse no. 2) by doing away with his would-be competitor to the throne (i.e. Lord Ram), but nevertheless he has erred on one count—and it is that in spite of knowing fully well that Lord Ram is alone and without any sort of support or help in the forest, he should come here with a huge army to challenge and hoping to defeat

the Lord, to either kill or imprison him (so that all chances of opposition for his grabbing the throne are eliminated). (3)

Well, Bharat would learn a bitter lesson of his life now when he sees the true face of Lord Ram in his wrathful and ferocious form in the battle-field¹. (4)

[Note—¹To wit, till now Bharat has been acquainted with an affable, amiable, merciful, compassionate, forgiving, loving, affectionate and smiling form of Lord Ram, so he thinks that the Lord is very docile, meek, weak and incompetent as a warrior. But now Bharat would see the fiery form of Lord Ram when the Lord lashes out at him with a ferocity Bharat has never ever imagined in his wildest of dreams. His ambitious dreams of neutralizing his opponent in the form of Lord Ram would return to haunt him like a nightmare that would scare the wits out of his ghost.]

एतना कहत नीति रस भूला । रन रस बिटपु पुलक मिस फूला ॥ ५ ॥
प्रभु पद बंदि सीस रज राखी । बोले सत्य सहज बलु भाषी ॥ ६ ॥

ētanā kahata nīti rasa bhūlā. rana rasa biṭapu pulaka misa phūlā. 5.
prabhu pada bandi sīsa raja rākhī. bōlē satya sahaja balu bhāṣī. 6.

Saying this, Laxman became so excited and vehement with a surge of anger within him that while talking about probity and propriety just a while ago vis-à-vis Bharat's conduct, he himself forgot about following norms of proper conduct and failed to exercise restraint upon himself, as if a tree symbolizing the virtues of wisdom and calmness of demeanours has suddenly sprouted flowers of bravery, valour and daring that are the hallmarks of a warrior who is provoked. (5)

Thus stoked, Laxman bowed his head at the august feet of Lord Ram and put its dust on his head to invoke the Lord's blessings as he said in an honest show of strength, valour, bravery and courage. (6)

अनुचित नाथ न मानब मोरा । भरत हमहि उपचार न थोरा ॥ ७ ॥
कहँ लगि सहिअ रहिअ मनु मारें । नाथ साथ धनु हाथ हमारें ॥ ८ ॥

anucita nātha na mānaba mōrā. bharata hamahi upacāra na thōrā. 7.
kaham' lagi sahi'a rahi'a manu mārēm. nātha sātha dhanu hātha hamārēm. 8.

[Laxman said very sarcastically, and his comments show how vehement and determined he was to settle old scores with Bharat—]

‘Oh Lord, please don't take me in the wrong light, nor think that I am being impudent and impertinent in any way. But our relationships with Bharat have been soured for quite a long time, and we do not lack in resources to find a remedy for this illness. (7)

Say oh Lord, for how long are we going to suffer in silence, and bear with the insult that has been heaped upon us and rubbed salt on our injured self-respect and dignity?

Well, we have our bow and arrow with us, we have our hands with which to defend our honour and dignity.’¹ (8)

[Note—¹Laxman says angrily: “My Lord, enough is surely enough. We have had enough of rough handling and shoddy treatment, but till now we have exercised self-control and patience. Yet the thing does not seem to end there, for our calmness and keeping quiet has been misinterpreted by others as a sign of our weakness, meekness, incompetence, and humble submission to powers-that-be. Say, why should we be subjected to further humiliation? After all, what use will be our bows and arrows if we don’t put them to good use to defend our honour, self-esteem and dignity? Are we cowards and imbeciles to stand with a lowered head like a falsely convicted person does before an emperor, waiting for a predetermined judgment that would mercilessly nail him to the cross of his death? Why, that would bring shame and infamy to us because we belong to a proud and upright race called the ‘Kshatriyas’ (i.e. the warriors race) that never bows its head before an enemy, no matter how mighty it may be. {Refer—Doha no. 229 herein below.}

We can’t allow ourselves to be kicked around in this manner any more. See, I am determined to put this drama to an end, so please oh Lord, don’t say: ‘let’s leave this place and go elsewhere in order to avoid a clash with Bharat’.”]

दो०. छत्रि जाति रघुकुल जनमु राम अनुग जगु जान ।
लातहुँ मारें चढ़ति सिर नीच को धूरि समान ॥ २२९ ॥

dōhā.

chatri jāti raghukula janamu rāma anuga jagu jāna.
lātahum̐ mārēr̐ carhati sira nīca kō dhūri samāna. 229.

[Laxman says—] ‘I am born in the brave Kshatriya (warrior) race, and that too in the illustrious family of king Raghu (that is renowned for its brave, valiant and courageous kings). Further, I am a younger brother of Lord Ram which the world well knows about. [So therefore, I simply can’t lie down and cope with any more humiliation and insults.]

See, the dust is such a lowly and despicable entity that even when one kicks it, it will shamelessly rise up and go to land on one’s head.’¹ (Doha no. 229)

[Note—¹The ‘dust’ here refers to Bharat and the crown of Ayodhya. Laxman says that Lord Ram had kicked away the crown of Ayodhya and forgone all relations with Bharat like a man shakes the dust off his feet and washes it clean, to forget all about it. But Bharat is so lowly that instead of feeling ashamed of himself, he has collected an army to wage war with Lord Ram. What can be more contemptible than this?

We can see obviously how much Laxman is extremely angry and so annoyed with Bharat that he calls him ‘the dust of a person’s feet’! It also shows how disgusted and disgruntled he is by the way Lord Ram was disinherited by his father at the behest of a woman (Kaikeyi) and made to exit Ayodhya in an unceremonious manner, because we see that Laxman likens the crown of the kingdom as worthless ‘dust’ that Lord Ram has ‘kicked’ away.

The vehemence with which Laxman reacts to the news of Bharat coming with a huge army to the forest, and heading in the direction where Lord Ram stays, and his

determination to teach Bharat the lesson of his life by repulsing his military objectives and giving him the same medicine that he has planned to give Lord Ram, is almost like a suppressed volcano erupting with all its fury.

In sage Veda Vyas' narration of the epic story of the Ramayana, called the "Adhyatma Ramayan", we come across an interesting episode which clearly endorses the view stated herein above that the present angry outburst and resentful diatribe of Laxman against Bharat was the result of his anger that he had suppressed for long. We read in Adhyatma Ramayan that when Laxman first came to know that king Dasrath has ordered Lord Ram to proceed to the forest, because he had meekly bowed to the demands of Kaikeyi who wished her son Bharat to take the crown and Lord Ram be banished from the kingdom, Laxman had burst angrily with vehemence; he minced no words in declaring his intention to capture and kill his father Dasrath and brother Bharat, along with all those who support them, and had asked Lord Ram to confidently defy Dasrath and challenge his outrageous and totally uncalled for and unethical order that the Lord should go to exile in the forest. At that time, Lord Ram had asked Laxman to calm down while briefly teaching him about the futility of longing for worldly gains, such as the crown of a kingdom, at the cost of disobeying the father and appearing to stand in the way of his dear brother Bharat acquiring the crown. {Refer: Veda Vyas' "Adhyatma Ramayan", Ayodhya Kand, Canto 4, verse nos. 14-44.}]

चौ०. उठि कर जोरि रजायसु मागा । मनहुँ बीर रस सोवत जागा ॥ १ ॥

बाँधि जटा सिर कसि कटि भाथा । साजि सरासनु सायकु हाथा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

uṭhi kara jōri rajāyasu māgā. manahum̐ bīra rasa sōvata jāgā. 1.

bām̐dhi jaṭā sira kasi kaṭi bhāthā. sāji sarāsanu sāyaku hāthā. 2.

Laxman got up, joined the palms of his hands in a prayerful mode to seek Lord Ram's permission and blessing (to face Bharat in an encounter, and boldly repulse his miscalculated and misconceived adventure).

Verily indeed, at that time it appeared that the grand old virtues valour, gallantry, courage and heroism had manifested themselves in the form of Laxman. (1)

Laxman prepared himself for the encounter by tying the long lock of hairs in a tight girdle over his head, arranging the quiver properly around his waist, stringing his bow and mounting an arrow on it, ready to be shot off. (2)

आजु राम सेवक जसु लेऊँ । भरतहि समर सिखावन देऊँ ॥ ३ ॥

राम निरादर कर फलु पाई । सोवहुँ समर सेज दोउ भाई ॥ ४ ॥

āju rāma sēvaka jasu lē'ūm̐. bharatahi samara sikhāvana dē'ūm̐. 3.

rāma nirādara kara phalu pāī. sōvahum̐ samara sēja dō'u bhāī. 4.

Taking position for the forthcoming battle, Laxman declared boldly: ‘Let me acquire fame today as a loyal and trusted servant of Lord Ram, for I shalt teach Bharat the most bitter lesson of his life in the battle that is about to ensue. (3)

I shalt teach him what the reward of insulting and humiliating Lord Ram is, for I shalt make the both the brothers (i.e. Bharat and Shatrughan) lie down and sleep for eternity on the bedstead of the battle-field. (4)

आइ बना भल सकल समाजू । प्रगट करउँ रिस पाछिल आजू ॥ ५ ॥

जिमि करि निकर दलइ मृगराजू । लेइ लपेटि लवा जिमि बाजू ॥ ६ ॥

तैसेहिं भरतहि सेन समेता । सानुज निदरि निपातउँ खेता ॥ ७ ॥

जौं सहाय कर संकरु आई । तौ मारउँ रन राम दोहाई ॥ ८ ॥

ā'i banā bhala sakala samājū. pragaṭa kara'um̐ risa pāchila ājū. 5.

jimi kari nikara dala'i mrgarājū. lē'i lapēṭi lavā jimi bājū. 6.

taisēhiṁ bharatahi sēna samētā. sānuja nidari nipāta'um̐ khētā. 7.

jauṁ sahāya kara saṅkaru āī. tau māra'um̐ rana rāma dōhāī. 8.

It's good that the whole group (that conspired against Lord Ram) has fallen pray to the temptations to come here together, for now I shalt vent my ire and unfold my old animosity with them to settle scores with all of them in one go¹. (5)

Just like the lion, the king of animals, tears through a herd of elephants, killing them and making them run helter skelter for their lives, or the hawk swoops down on a bird (the lark) and grabs the latter in its claws to carry it away (to kill it subsequently), --- (6)

--- So wouldst I trounce Bharat along with his younger brother (Shatrughan) and their troops and make them all bite the dust in the battle-field. (7)

Even if Lord Shiva comes to their aid, I vow in the name of Lord Ram that still I wouldst (not spare them but) slay them². (8)

[Note—¹In this context, refer to the observations appended to Doha no. 229 herein above, where it has been pointed out how Laxman had become extremely angry at the time when Lord Ram was asked to go to exile in the forest by his father, king Dasrath, and Laxman had threatened to capture and kill Dasrath and Bharat, along with anyone who sided with them, if Lord Ram does not object and prevent him from doing so. This episode is not narrated in Ram Charit Manas though, but it is narrated in detail in Veda Vyas' “Adhyatma Ramayan”, Ayodhya Kand, Canto 4, verse nos. 14-17.

²We have two other remarkable examples in the story when Laxman has poured brimstone, fire and venom when Lord Ram's honour was at stake. These two occasions were during the bow-breaking ceremony at Janakpur.

In the first incident, when all the assembled kings, princes, knights and warriors had failed to move the bow even an inch, what to talk of breaking it as the condition set by king Janak for marrying his daughter Sita, the host, i.e. king Janak,

had become very depressed and distressed that now his daughter would have to live unmarried. At that time, Janak, out of frustration, had remarked that had he known that the earth was devoid of warriors strong, powerful, bold and courageous enough to lift even an old and worn-out bow that actually belonged to Lord Shiva, he wouldn't have called for this ceremony and made this 'breaking of the bow' a condition for his daughter's marriage. This statement infuriated Laxman as it meant that Lord Ram too was inept, weak, incompetent, lacking strength, valour and courage like the rest of the assembled guests. So, Laxman stood up and poured out his anger at Janak boldly, criticizing him and using stern language against him, disregarding the latter's high position as the king of the place, an honourable person, and the fact that he was the host of the assembly. Laxman did not even fear of the repercussions of his behaviour, because Janak could have asked his army to immediately arrest this boy for his rude and impertinent behaviour. At that time, Lord Ram had quietly asked Laxman to calm down and not to misbehave by breaking norms of protocol. {This episode is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 249—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 254.}

The second incident happened quick on the heels of the first incident narrated herein above. When sage Parashuram heard of the breaking of the bow of Lord Shiva, he became very angry, and came to the venue to punish the person who had broken the bow. When he learnt that it was Lord Ram who had done it, the angry sage turned his ire on the Lord. Lord Ram remained calm and submissive before the great sage in deference to his exalted and high stature even though the sage kept on threatening the Lord with dire consequences. At that time too, Laxman stepped in to defend Lord Ram, and a hot and acrimonious verbal duel followed between Laxman and sage Parashuram*1. On this occasion too, it was Lord Ram who frowned and glared at Laxman, ordering him to maintain decorum and become quiet*2. Finally, sage Parashuram realized who Lord Ram actually was, and then he bowed before the Lord and went to the forest to do penance*2. {This episode is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, *1 = Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 268—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 278; *2 = Doha no. 278; and *3 = Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 279—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 285.}]

दो०. अति सरोष माखे लखनु लखि सुनि सपथ प्रवान ।
सभय लोक सब लोकपति चाहत भभरि भगान ॥ २३० ॥

dōhā.

ati sarōṣa mākhē lakhanu lakhi suni sapatha pravāna.
sabhaya lōka saba lōkapati cāhata bhabhari bhagāna. 230.

Laxman spoke very angrily, and hearing his stern vow there was a great turmoil everywhere even as all the custodians or guardians of the different sectors of the world became so terrified (of the calamity about to unfold) that they started running away out of fear¹. (Doha no. 230)

[Note—¹Laxman's anger was legendary. He had threatened to pound the earth and break it into two like an old mud pitcher, and throw the world like a man throwing a stone by a sling when king Janak had observed that he bemoans that the earth has become deficit of brave and strong warriors. At that time, the earth shook and the

Diggajs (mighty elephants who are said to support the earth from its corners) squirmed uneasily, while everyone present at the venue became terrified out of their wits. This episode is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 253—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 254.]

चौ०. जगु भय मगन गगन भइ बानी । लखन बाहुबलु बिपुल बखानी ॥ १ ॥

तात प्रताप प्रभाउ तुम्हारा । को कहि सकइ को जाननिहारा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

jagu bhaya magana gagana bha'i bānī. lakhana bāhubalu bipula bakhānī. 1.
tāta pratāpa prabhā'u tumhārā. kō kahi saka'i kō jānanihārā. 2.

The whole world seemed to be numbed and paralysed by the threat of Laxman. At that time, a voice was heard from the sky (heavens) that praised Laxman and his bravery, as well as the strength of his arms in lavish terms. (1)

The voice said: 'Dear (tāta), who does not know about your glories, virtues, qualities and valour, as well as the profound influence that you can exert over others. Who can sufficiently narrate them, and who can sufficiently know them in their entirety?'¹ (2)

[Note—¹To wit, said the voice from the heavens, Laxman's greatness was so immense and his influence over others so overriding and well known in this world that they do not require any special mention to highlight them, for they are self-illuminated.

The voice praised Laxman when it said: "Oh Laxman, who does naught wot that there is no match for thee and thine glories, valour and virtues" in order to calm him down and sooth his anger, because it is a common observation that when a person is angry, then the best way to make him calm down is to praise his qualities instead of criticizing him, as the latter option would only add fuel to the raging fire and infuriate the person further. If an angry person is praised for his goodness and good qualities, then he would feel ashamed of himself that he has undermined his positive character by becoming angry, as anger only highlights his negative side; his sub-conscious would tell him to behave properly and live up to the standard for which he is being praised, for continuing to be wrathful and angry would only undercut his own reputation of being a good person.

Hence, praises act like spraying water on fire, whilst criticism is like adding fuel to it. The praise of the voice from the sky quietened Laxman a lot.]

अनुचित उचित काजु किछु होऊ । समुझि करिअ भल कह सबु कोऊ ॥ ३ ॥

सहसा करि पाछें पछिताहीं । कहहिं बेद बुध ते बुध नाहीं ॥ ४ ॥

anucita ucita kāju kichu hō'ū. samujhi kari'a bhala kaha sabu kō'ū. 3.
sahasā kari pāchēm pachitāhīm. kahahīm bēda budha tē budha nāhīm. 4.

One ought to always think before taking any action, because doing anything rashly and without proper thought to its consequences may be counter-productive.

So, it is well advised that before doing anything one ought to weigh its pros and cons, to consider whether or not what one is about to do is proper and in accordance with norms. (3)

Doing anything hastily and rashly now, only to regret for it later, is not a wise thing, and anyone who acts without thinking is not a wise man either: so says the Vedas (scriptures) as well as wise men.’ (4)

सुनि सुर बचन लखन सकुचाने । राम सीयँ सादर सनमाने ॥ ५ ॥
 कही तात तुम्ह नीति सुहाई । सब तें कठिन राजमदु भाई ॥ ६ ॥
 जो अचवँत नृप मातहिं तेई । नाहिन साधुसभा जेहिं सेई ॥ ७ ॥
 सुनहु लखन भल भरत सरीसा । बिधि प्रपंच महँ सुना न दीसा ॥ ८ ॥

sunī sura bacana lakhana sakucānē. rāma sīyam̐ sādara sanamānē. 5.
 kahī tāta tumha nīti suhāī. saba tēm̐ kaṭhina rājamadu bhāī. 6.
 jō acavam̐ta nr̥pa mātahim̐ tēī. nāhina sādhusabhā jēhim̐ sēī. 7.
 sunahu lakhana bhala bharata sarīsā. bidhi prapañca maham̐ sunā na dīsā. 8.

Hearing these words of warning given by the gods (i.e. by the voice from the sky), Laxman became hesitant, embarrassed and bashful (because he immediately realized that what he had said in a fit of anger was wrong and unacceptable).

Seeing him feeling downcast and guilty (of showing arrogance and impertinence, of being hasty in making declarations and heaping accusations on Bharat without ascertaining the facts), Lord Ram and Sita intervened affectionately to sooth his nerves and cheer him up by showing respect to his loyalty and love for them which had made him so angry in the first place. (5)

They told Laxman politely and in affectionate terms: ‘Dear (tāta), what you have said is indeed true and it is supported by an old adage, that the most difficult temptation to resist and overcome is the arrogance and haughtiness that comes to a person when he acquires power and authority associated with his being elevated to a great position such as ascending the throne of a great kingdom or position of power in a government¹. (6)

But only those people (kings) who have never had a chance to meet and interact with saints and pious souls think and behave in this way (i.e. they become influenced and are affected by the negative effects of acquisition of power and authority). (7)

Listen Laxman, Bharat’s case is absolutely different and unique, for there is no one in the entire creation crafted by the Creator who can match with Bharat in virtuousness, goodness, excellence of character and other stellar qualities². (8)

[Note—¹Laxman has made this statement in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 228.

²Earlier, sage Bharadwaj has also praised Bharat in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 207—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 210.

Prior to that, the deity of Triveni at Prayag had also praised the virtues of Bharat in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 205.]

दो०. भरतहि होइ न राजमदु बिधि हरि हर पद पाइ ।
कबहुँ कि काँजी सीकरनि छीरसिंधु बिनसाइ ॥ २३१ ॥

dōhā.

bharatahi hō'i na rājamadu bidhi hari hara pada pā'i.
kabahum' ki kāmñi sīkarani chīrasindhu binasā'i. 231.

[Lord Ram told Laxman—] ‘Verily indeed and without gainsay, I can vouchsafe that Bharat wilt never ever have the negative trait of arrogance and haughtiness associated with acquisition of power and authority that comes to a person when he becomes a king (nr̥pamadu) even if he gets to ascend the throne that would make him as exalted as the Trinity Gods, such as the Creator (Brahma), Lord Hari (Vishnu) and Lord Hara (Shiva) themselves.

Say, can a few drops of a fermented liquid called ‘Kanji’¹ ever ruin an ocean filled with milk? [No, never. So similarly, a few specks of worldly honours here and there, a few worldly titles and royal robes now and then, are definitely not going to affect or disturb the calmness of the ocean of Bharat’s immaculate character and stellar virtues as to make him greed for power and get overwhelmed with jealousy for his own elder brother whom he loves, respects and adores so much. Hence, oh Laxman, do not harbour such erroneous thoughts regarding Bharat in thy mind as they would negatively affect thine own reputation, corrupt thine wisdom, and have an adverse effect on thy peace of mind, rather than affecting Bharat and his reputation in any way. Hence, banish all such unwarranted thoughts from thy mind.]’ (Doha no. 231)

[Note—¹Kanji (kāmñi) is a fermented drink prepared by dissolving powdered rye seeds in water and then allowing the mixture to stand for a few days, so that the liquid becomes sour and acquires a bitter twang in its taste. It is often used in traditional Indian cuisine in place of vinegar.

Say, how will a few drops of this Kanji spoil the water of the ocean, or for that matter even of a river or a lake so as to make it’s water change its taste?]

चौ०. तिमिरु तरुन तरनिहि मकु गिलई । गगनु मगन मकु मेघहिं मिलई ॥ १ ॥
गोपद जल बूड़हिं घटजोनी । सहज छमा बरु छाड़ै छोनी ॥ २ ॥
मसक फूँक मकु मेरु उड़ाई । होइ न नृपमदु भरतहि भाई ॥ ३ ॥

caupā'i.

timiru taruna taranihi maku gila'i. gaganu magana maku mēghahim mila'i. 1.
gōpada jala būṛahim ghaṭajōnī. sahaja chamā baru chāṛai chōnī. 2.

masaka phūmka maku mēru urā'i. hō'i na nr̥pamadu bharatahi bhā'i. 3

[Lord Ram reiterates his support for Bharat by endorsing his excellent character and virtues. The Lord cites other examples in the following set of verses to stress that the impossible things he mentions now may happen perchance, but Bharat won't be influenced by negative thoughts, nor would he get distracted from the steadfastness with which he follows the path of virtuousness.]

Lord Ram told Laxman: 'It may perchance happen that the darkness (of night) may swallow the splendorous disc of the midday sun, or the sky, in which everything is immersed (or which encompasses and harbours everything in creation) may itself be devoured by the cloud, --- (1)

--- Or it may perchance happen that sage Agastya (who was born out of a pitcher; "ghaṭajōnī"), who had swallowed the ocean in mere three gulps by lifting it in cupped palms, get drowned in the water collected in a shallow hollow formed by a cow's hooves, or the Mother Earth abandons her famed nature of being eternally forgiving and tolerant (as the earth never complains about the way it is being mercilessly and relentlessly exploited for its natural resources and tormented endlessly by getting dug, bored, gored, sheared and trampled upon), --- (2)

--- Or it may also happen that the huge mountain known as Sumeru (the legendary golden mountain which is the abode of the gods) may be dislodged and blown away by the puffing of a mosquito, but oh my dear brother Laxman, it is impossible that Bharat wouldst ever have the negative trait of arrogance and haughtiness associated with acquisition of a position of power and authority that comes to a person when he becomes a king (nr̥pamadu). (3)

लखन तुम्हार सपथ पितु आना । सुचि सुबंधु नहिं भरत समाना ॥ ४ ॥
सगुनु खीरु अवगुन जलु ताता । मिलइ रचइ परपंचु बिधाता ॥ ५ ॥
भरतु हंस रबिबंस तड़ागा । जनमि कीन्ह गुन दोष बिभागा ॥ ६ ॥

lakhana tumhāra sapatha pitu ānā. suci subandhu nahim bharata samānā. 4.
sagunu khīru avaguna jalu tāta. mila'i raca'i parapañcu bidhātā. 5.
bharatu hansa rabibansa tarāgā. janami kīnha guna dōṣa bibhāgā. 6.

Oh Laxman, I confidently vouchsafe and swear in thy name as well as that of our respected father (Dasrath) that there cannot be a brother as pure-hearted, devoted, virtuous and excellent in character as Bharat is. (4)

The Creator has created this creation by the process of mixing two liquids having opposite characters: one is milk representing goodness and virtuousness, and the other is water representing wickedness and evil nature¹. (5)

By taking birth in the form of a symbolic swan in the lake representing the family of king Raghu (of Ayodhya), Bharat has shown (by his actions and deeds) the difference between what is good, righteous and virtuous, and what is to the contrary². (6)

[Note—¹Upanishads say that the Creator has used three basic characters, called the ‘three Gunas’, to give shape to the character of the world (Nature) that he had crafted. These three Gunas are Sata (best and positive qualities in a creature), Raja (medium qualities) and Tama (dark or negative qualities) respectively.

The resultant product, which we call the world in which we live, is an admixture of these three qualities. So therefore, all the three qualities are present everywhere, in all individuals, at all times. The difference between a good individual on one side of the scale, and an evil one on the opposite side of the scale, is dependent on the ratio or proportion of these three Gunas that are present in the individual’s character.

To wit, no one can claim that he is totally free from any of the three Gunas, because such claim is against the very basic structure that the Creator has designed. But at the same time an excellent person can certainly claim that the proportion of the Sata Guna in him is nearly its highest mark, while the other two Gunas, the Raja and Tama, are almost negligible to have any perceivable or discernible effect on his character. The three Gunas in different proportions and ratios, in different permutations and combinations, present a huge canvas of endless possibilities of character traits that the creatures would have.

The Creator was like a researcher working in a laboratory when he first set about in the process of creating something new from the basic ingredients he had—viz. a liquid representing good qualities (symbolized by milk), and a liquid representing bad qualities (symbolized by water). He mixed the two to produce a third liquid—which obviously had the qualities of the two basic ingredients used to produce it. To wit, this new product, viz. the ‘creation’, would have both the ‘good’ as well as the ‘bad’ qualities in it in varying proportions that would depend upon the amount of milk and water used to produce a particular sample.

Pure milk invariably has water as one of its main constituent, because anything that is not dry and solid must have a component of ‘water element’ in it. But at the same time, ‘pure milk’ has countless nutrients and nourishing properties that its adulterated counterpart won’t have. The more water is added to pure milk, the more diluted the latter becomes, thereby making it lose its stellar nourishing qualities and virtues of purity, although it will continue to look ‘white’ to the beholder. This means that what we physically see in this world is often misleading and away from the truth.

The same thing applies in the context of Bharat. On the surface it may appear that he was going to the forest to have a face-off with Lord Ram, and the army which accompanied him gives rise to such suspicion, as it did to Laxman. But when explored and examined closely and deeply one would discover that Bharat was a pious soul fully devoted to Lord Ram and upholding the laws of Dharma. This is what Lord Ram means here in these verses.

²Kaikeyi and Bharat were members of the same family; Kaikeyi was not only Bharat’s mother but also a senior queen in the royal household of king Dasrath. The way they had acted and behaved were diametrically opposite of each other, and it brought to the fore the stark difference between what constitutes wickedness and evil (symbolized by Kaikeyi) on the one hand, and what is goodness, righteousness, probity, propriety, ethical conduct and piety (Bharat) on the other hand.]

गहि गुन पय तजि अवगुन बारी । निज जस जगत कीन्हि उजिआरी ॥ ७ ॥

कहत भरत गुन सीलु सुभाऊ । पेम पयोधि मगन रघुराऊ ॥ ८ ॥

gahi guna paya taji avaguna bārī. nija jasa jagata kīnhi ujī'ārī. 7.
kahata bharata guna sīlu subhā'ū. pēma payōdhi magana raghurā'ū. 8.

By accepting milk of goodness representing virtuousness and righteousness, and discarding water¹ of wickedness, evilness, selfishness and greed, Bharat has established his glories and made them shine in the whole world.' (7)

While thus praising the virtues and glories of Bharat as well as his pious nature and good character, Lord Ram became very emotional, so much so that the Lord virtually got submerged in an ocean of love and affection for Bharat. (8)

[Note—¹In verse no. 6 herein above, Bharat has been likened to a 'swan' floating in a lake representing the family of king Raghu. The swan is reputed as a bird that would drink only pure milk, and if it is diluted with water the swan has the natural ability to filter the water out and suck in only the pure part of milk.

So, Bharat was able to stand against all temptations and refuse all baits dangled before him by way of everyone trying to persuade him to accept the crown of the kingdom, but instead he decided to go to the forest to ask for forgiveness from Lord Ram for the mischief his mother had created, and bring the Lord back home. This action of his made him famous in the world as a very righteous prince with an excellent character.]

दो०. सुनि रघुबर बानी बिबुध देखि भरत पर हेतु ।
सकल सराहत राम सो प्रभु को कृपानिकेतु ॥ २३२ ॥
dōhā.

sunī raghubara bānī bibudha dēkhi bharata para hētu.
sakala sarāhata rāma sō prabhu kō krpānikētu. 232.

When the gods heard the affectionate words of Lord Ram in praise of Bharat and they observed the Lord's immense love for him, the gods themselves were overwhelmed. They praised Lord Ram unanimously, saying: 'Who else would be as merciful, compassionate, gracious and benevolent as Lord Ram is in this world?'¹ (Doha no. 232)

[Note—¹The gods meant that Lord Ram is so nice and forgiving that he did not take offense at all against Bharat though it was because of the latter that the Lord had to suffer so much by being sent to the forest. Say, who else would have thought so lovingly about his brother as Lord Ram did vis-à-vis Bharat in the backdrop of the developments that had taken place? This in itself is enough to prove how merciful, gracious, forgiving, kind, compassionate, benevolent and magnanimous Lord Ram is, that instead of looking at the negative side of a person, he would highlight his positive side.

It is to be remarked at this juncture that the wisdom, forbearance, patience and foresight shown by Lord Ram in the face of provocative statements of Laxman had

helped to avoid a great and ignominious fratricidal war, and its accompanying horrible consequences and bloodshed.]

चौ०. जौं न होत जग जनम भरत को । सकल धरम धुर धरनि धरत को ॥ १ ॥
 कबि कुल अगम भरत गुन गाथा । को जानइ तुम्ह बिनु रघुनाथा ॥ २ ॥
 लखन राम सियँ सुनि सुर बानी । अति सुखु लहेउ न जाइ बखानी ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

jauri na hōta jaga janama bharata kō. sakala dharama dhura dharani dharata kō. 1.

kabi kula agama bharata guna gāthā. kō jāna'i tumha binu raghunāthā. 2.
 lakhana rāma siyam' suni sura bānī. ati sukhu lahē'u na jā'i bakhānī. 3.

Praising Bharat and endorsing Lord Ram's views about him, the gods unanimously declared: 'Had not Bharat been born in this world, who else would have set an example and championed the cause of Dharma by upholding its stellar principles of righteousness, probity, propriety, ethical conduct and noble thoughts? (1)

Bharat's glories and virtues are so profound and extensive that even the wisest and the most learned of bards and poets are unable to fathom them and describe them in their entirety. Oh Lord Ram, the Lord of the Raghus (raghunāthā), no one else knows as much about Bharat as you do.

[So therefore, since you have lauded Bharat's virtues, since you have praised and honoured him so much yourself, then surely and without doubt Bharat deserves to be praised and honoured by one and all in this world. Surely, Bharat is a personification of goodness, and all that is good, virtuous, righteous and noble in this world—there is no doubt about it.]' (2)

When Laxman, Lord Ram and Sita heard these words of the gods in praise of Bharat, they felt very glad and exhilarated (because it meant that Bharat's glories and virtuous nature were true as they have been acknowledged and endorsed even by the gods, which was no small thing as the gods were revered by all others in this world, and they won't make false statements just to please someone). (3)

इहाँ भरतु सब सहित सहाए । मंदाकिनीं पुनीत नहाए ॥ ४ ॥
 सरित समीप राखि सब लोगा । मागि मातु गुर सचिव नियोगा ॥ ५ ॥
 चले भरतु जहँ सिय रघुराई । साथ निषादनाथु लघु भाई ॥ ६ ॥

ihām' bharatu saba sahita sahā'ē. mandākinī'm punīta nahā'ē. 4.
 sarita samīpa rākhi saba lōgā. māgi mātu gura saciva niyōgā. 5.
 calē bharatu jaham' siya raghurā'ī. sātha niṣādanāthu laghu bhā'ī. 6.

[Now we shall pick up the thread of the story from where we had left it a little while ago, where we have read that Bharat had reached the outskirts of Chitrakoot on the last leg of his journey, and was almost on the doorstep of Lord Ram's hermitage near

the banks of river Mandakini. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 225—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 226.]

Meanwhile, Bharat and his entourage reached the holy river Mandakini in which everyone took a bath. (4)

Asking everyone to stay in a camp near the banks of the river, and taking permission from the mothers, his guru (sage Vasistha) and the ministers who accompanied him, --
- (5)

--- Bharat took his younger brother (Shatrughan) and Guha Nishad along with him, and proceeded in the direction where Lord Ram's hermitage was (nestled in the valley of the hills of Chitrakoot). (5)

समुझि मातु करतब सकुचाहीं । करत कुतरक कोटि मन माहीं ॥ ७ ॥
रामु लखनु सिय सुनि मम नाऊँ । उठि जनि अनत जाहिं तजि ठाऊँ ॥ ८ ॥

samujhi mātu karataba sakucāhīm. karata kutaraka kōṭi mana māhīm. 7
rāmu lakhanu siya suni mama nā'ūṁ. uṭhi jani anata jāhīm taji ṭhā'ūṁ. 8.

On his way, Bharat had countless wild thoughts and evil conjectures swirling through his distraught mind even as he pondered on the wicked deeds that were perpetrated by his mother (Kaikeyi), and the consequences that they may have precipitated, which in turn may upset everything he has planned.

[To wit, Bharat was at a loss to be certain about the type of reception he would get from Lord Ram when they meet; he wondered if the Lord would sternly rebuke him and refuse to meet him at all, or worse, in order to shun Bharat the Lord may leave the place and go somewhere else even before Bharat reaches there. This doubt is clearly reflected in the following verse.] (7)

God forbid that when Lord Ram, Laxman and Sita hear my name (i.e. when someone tells them that I have come to meet them), they might leave the place and go somewhere else in order to shun me.

[To wit, the forlorn Bharat thought gloomily: “Well, it is quite possible that the mere mention of my name might so much annoy Lord Ram that he may immediately leave his hermitage and go elsewhere in order to avoid me and seeing my face. Oh god, what will I do then?”] (8)

दो०. मातु मते महूँ मानि मोहि जो कछु करहिं सो थोर ।
अघ अवगुन छमि आदरहिं समुझि आपनी ओर ॥ २३३ ॥
dōhā.

mātu matē mahum' māni mōhi jō kachu karahim sō thōra.
agha avaguna chami ādarahim samujhi āpanī ōra. 233.

‘Thinking me to be an accomplice in the evil deeds and mischief perpetrated by my mother (Kaikeyi), whatever Lord Ram says by way of admonishing and chastising me will be in the fitness of thing and much less than the contempt and scorn I certainly deserve.

On the other hand, I am also quite certain that the Lord would forgive me and accept my apologies by considering the fact that I have come to humbly submit myself unconditionally before him and seek pardon, then also there is no wonder in it because the Lord has a very kind, gracious, compassionate, benevolent and loving nature.’¹ (Doha no. 233)

[Note—¹One thing is to be remarked here, and it is that in the beginning when Bharat had declared his decision not to accept the crown and to proceed to the forest instead to ask for forgiveness from Lord Ram and try to bring him back home, he had expressed his confidence that the Lord would certainly forgive him and show affection towards him—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 183.

Two opposite thoughts have, however, confounded Bharat at this juncture. On the one hand he thinks that he would face Lord Ram’s anger for the wickedness his mother has done, and the Lord may accuse him of being hand-in-glove with his mother. This may result in things going sour, but Lord Ram would not be wrong if he sternly admonishes him (i.e. Bharat) because he certainly deserves punishment for the evil things that were done in his name. This kind of thought distressed Bharat a lot, and his legs felt heavy as lead even as he tried to drag them towards Lord Ram’s hermitage.

The other thought, though, was very soothing and reassuring for Bharat, as he felt that he is unnecessarily getting upset, for nothing such thing would happen. Why? It is because Lord Ram is so merciful and forgiving that no sooner Bharat asks to be forgiven, but the Lord would rush forward to lovingly welcome and embrace him.

These contradictory ideas overwhelmed Bharat so much so that for a moment he would totter as if about to fall down, and the other moment he would move briskly forward towards Lord Ram’s hermitage. He appeared to be like a person in a delirium. Refer to Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precedes Doha no. 234 herein below.]

चौ०. जौं परिहरहिं मलिन मनु जानी । जौं सनमानहिं सेवकु मानी ॥ १ ॥

मोरें सरन रामहि की पनही । राम सुस्वामि दोसु सब जनही ॥ २ ॥

जग जस भाजन चातक मीना । नेम पेम निज निपुन नबीना ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

jauṁ pariharahiṁ malina manu jānī. jauṁ sanamānahiṁ sēvaku mānī. 1.

mōrēm sarana rāmahī kī panahī. rāma susvāmi dōsu saba janahī. 2.

jaga jasa bhājana cātaka mīnā. nēma pēma nija nipuna nabīnā. 3.

Bharat continues to brood: ‘Whether the Lord discards me with the thought that I am evil and had conspired with my mother in perpetrating the wickedness she had done, or the Lord welcomes and accepts me by realizing that I am his devoted servant who is pure in his heart and mind, --- (10

--- In both the cases however, my only succour and solace lies in seeking refuge in the august feet of Lord Ram, for it is my only destination, and serving the Lord's feet is my only objective.

Indeed and in all sooth, Lord Ram is the most honourable and noble Lord of them all, and whatever has gone wrong in the entire episode is surely due to me, and I accept responsibility for it as being my own fault, for the Lord is not at fault at all¹. (2)

Surely, there are only two creatures in this world, viz. the bird 'Chatak' and the 'fish', who are certainly worthy of getting high honours and lavish praises with respect to someone adhering to the principles of loyalty and devotion towards the object of one's affection, i.e. the rain-bearing cloud and the water respectively². (3)

[Note—¹Bharat is very gracious here as he has unconditionally accepted that he alone should be held accountable for all the mischief his mother had done, and all the consequences that followed. Lord Ram is innocent, and he must not be accused for being angry or harsh, as well as being insensitive to the sufferings of the people of Ayodhya by leaving them wailing and weeping, at the time the Lord had left the city on his father's instructions because Bharat's mother wanted her son to ascend the throne.

Bharat says that the Lord did what he did because he wished to honour his father's orders, because he did not want to give the impression that he is an obstacle in Bharat taking over the reins of the kingdom, and not because he got angry at being denied the crown at the last moment.

Further, Bharat says that though he was not a party to his mother's evil mechanisms, yet he cannot shrug it off his shoulders and deny moral responsibility for whatever that had happened because he is her son, and the mischief was done by her in 'his' name, for Kaikeyi has explicitly demanded that Lord Ram be sent to the forest and Bharat be appointed to the throne in the Lord's stead—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 29.

So therefore, Bharat says that he just can't sit back and wash this episode off from his hands.

Bharat's remorseful mood and his sense of extreme regret is also evident elsewhere—refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 199—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 201.

²Bharat cites two examples here. One is that of the bird known as 'Chātāk' (sparrow hawk) which is reputed to be so enamoured of the cloud that it has vowed not to drink any other kind of water except in the form of rain drops that the cloud would make to fall directly in its beak. Hence, during the rainy season, the bird gazes at the sky and awaits the arrival of the rain-bearing cloud when it would open its beak and stare at it in the hope that a few drops of rain from the cloud fall directly into its mouth and quench its thirst.

The other example is that of the 'fish'. The fish loves water so much that its life depends on the latter, for as soon as the fish is removed from the water, it starts getting agitated and would die if not restored to water once again.

Bharat means that though he claims that his love and devotion for Lord Ram is deep and unquestionable, but he fails the test, for the question arises that if it is so, then why did he leave the Lord and go to visit his maternal uncle*? {*Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 14; (ii)

Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 18; (iii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 31; and (iv) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 156.}

His mother had carried out her evil design during his absence, and had he not gone away then the story would have been different, for then he would have immediately intervened, pushed aside his mother, and prevented the things from going out of hand.

Both the sparrow hawk and the fish win hands down when it comes to being steadfast in their vows of love and devotion for the object they adore and worship, i.e. the rain-bearing cloud for the bird, and the water for the fish, but Bharat regrets that he has failed in this test. Why has he failed? Because he was away from Lord Ram for quite some time while visiting his maternal uncle, so he cannot claim that he can't live without the presence of Lord Ram near him. The sparrow hawk would die of thirst and the fish would die too if they are made to live away from the object of their love and adoration, but Bharat lived happily away from Lord Ram while he was at his maternal uncle's place.]

अस मन गुनत चले मग जाता । सकुच सनेहँ सिथिल सब गाता ॥ ४ ॥
 फेरति मनहुँ मातु कृत खोरी । चलत भगति बल धीरज धोरी ॥ ५ ॥
 जब समुझत रघुनाथ सुभाऊ । तब पथ परत उताइल पाऊ ॥ ६ ॥

asa mana gunata calē maga jātā. sakuca sanēham' sithila saba gātā. 4.
 phēratī manahum' mātu kṛta khōrī. calata bhagati bala dhīraja dhōrī. 5.
 jaba samujhata raghunātha subhā'ū. taba patha parata utā'ila pā'ū. 6.

In this way, full of remorse, torn between two opposite thoughts, and riding on the horns of doubts and consternations regarding what kind of fate awaits him, Bharat quietly kept on moving ahead on the path.

He was hesitant one moment and elated the other moment as the emotions of love and affections for Lord Ram overwhelmed his entire being, sending thrill through his body at one instant, and making it numb at the other instant¹. (4)

When he thought of his mother's evil deeds, it seemed that his legs refused to move forward but rather dragged him backwards²; but then he sought courage by relying on the virtue of devotion that seemed to encourage him and lift his sagging spirits enough to make him gather courage and move forward. (5)

When Bharat remembered the nature of Lord Ram (which was that the Lord was exceptionally merciful, compassionate, gracious, forgiving, loving, affectionate, benevolent and magnanimous)³, he became very excited and moved very swiftly (as if he would fly and reach the Lord as soon as he could). (6)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 198; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 220; (iii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 225.

²Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 233.

³Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 183 along with Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede it.]

भरत दसा तेहि अवसर कैसी । जल प्रबाहँ जल अलि गति जैसी ॥ ७ ॥
देखि भरत कर सोचु सनेहू । भा निषाद तेहि समयँ बिदेहू ॥ ८ ॥

bharata dasā tēhi avasara kaisī. jala prabāham̐ jala ali gati jaisī. 7.
dēkhi bharata kara sōcu sanēhū. bhā niṣāda tēhi samayam̐ bidēhū. 8.

The emotional condition of Bharat was such at that time that his gait and the manner of his steps were so erratic (i.e. slow now and swift the next moment; staggering now and steady the next instant; uncertain now and determined the next second) that they resembled the movement of a fly that is caught in the rapidly swirling water of the waves in a turbulent stream¹. (7)

When Nishad (who was constantly accompanying Bharat) observed the distressed state of mind that had made Bharat so worried, nervous, distraught, remorseful and uncertain on the one hand, and on the other hand feeling highly emotional and encouraged when he remembered Lord Ram's good nature and how much the Lord loves him (as stated in the forgoing verses), he (Nishad) empathized with Bharat and himself became overwhelmed with emotions that reflected those of Bharat, i.e. grief and dismay at one moment, and encouragement and hope in the next moment. (8)

[Note—¹When a fly is caught in the rapids of a stream, it loses its bearing and is carried away uncontrollably by the waves; the fly tosses and turns wildly, sometimes moving clockwise and sometimes anti-clockwise; sometimes forward, sometimes backwards, and sometimes in circles.

Bharat's movement is likened here to the way the fly would move when caught in rapid currents of a river—because Bharat was so emotionally drained and overwhelmed that his steps were erratic as if a man who is intoxicated.]

दो०. लगे होन मंगल सगुन सुनि गुनि कहत निषादु ।
मिटिहि सोचु होइहि हरषु पुनि परिनाम बिषादु ॥ २३४ ॥

dōhā.

lagē hōna maṅgala saguna suni guni kahata niṣādu.
miṭihi sōcu hō'ihi haraṣu puni parināma biṣādu. 234.

At that time, good omens appeared and auspicious signs became apparent. Nishad observed them and he interpreted them to be indicative of good tidings and success in the mission.

So therefore, he reassured Bharat and told him: 'Please stop worrying and feeling distressed so much, for these auspicious signs portend good for us, and I am sure that the result would provide happiness and joy very soon (hō'ihi haraṣu), but unfortunately (I must admit honestly) there would be sorrow and grief at the end of it (puni parināma biṣādu).¹' (Doha no. 234)

[Note—¹We will observe that Nishad seems to be good at reading signs of Nature. It is because in ancient times, forest dwelling people and those who lived in remote parts of the countryside had a knack to understand the clues provided by Nature regarding the things to come. We can say that they had some kind of a ‘sixth sense’ which would alert them about future developments.

Another thing we note here is that being a simple-hearted country folk, who were straightforward in their dealings, had no pretensions, and did not know the tricks of diplomacy, Nishad tells Bharat what came to his mind, without concealing anything—that the omens and signs mean that in the beginning there would be success and cheer, but later on grief and sorrows would return. And sure enough, it did happen that way—because in the first phase of the meeting between Lord Ram and Bharat it seemed that the Lord would yield to Bharat and heed his requests to return home*1, but then the situation changed and Bharat had to return home without Lord Ram accompanying him, with the only solace being that the Lord gave him is wooden sandals to represent himself*2.

{*1Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 263—to Doha no. 264.

*2Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 304—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 307; (ii) Doha no. 316 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede it; (iii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 319—to Doha no. 322.}]

चौ०. सेवक बचन सत्य सब जाने । आश्रम निकट जाइ निअराने ॥ १ ॥

भरत दीख बन सैल समाजू । मुदित छुधित जनु पाइ सुनाजू ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sēvaka bacana satya saba jānē. āśrama nikaṭa jā'i ni'arānē. 1.

bharata dīkha bana saila samājū. mudita chudhita janu pā'i sunājū. 2.

Bharat agreed with (Guha Nishad who was serving him as) his guide and companion (“sēvaka”; literally meaning a ‘servant’, but a word has many connotations and it must be interpreted in the right context and perspective), and knew that his (Nishad’s) words were true (or that he had interpreted the signs correctly, and was therefore speaking the truth when he had said that they would soon hear good tidings but everything may end in a sad note)¹. (1)

When Bharat saw in its entirety (samājū) the pristine beauty of Nature spread all around the place where Lord Ram dwelt, the verdant forests and virgin hills surrounding the area (of Chitrakoot) (bana saila), he felt very exhilarated as if a hungry person has sighted delicious food to satisfy his hunger². (2)

[Note—¹If we refer to Doha no. 234 herein above in the context of what has been said in the present verse, there are three very interesting observations that we can make at this juncture.

The first is that Bharat could read and correctly interpret the signs and omens presented by Nature as much as Guha Nishad could. The reason is that Bharat, being a prince of a great kingdom, had received, like Lord Ram and his other brothers,

excellent training and education in all the spheres of knowledge as is clearly mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 204.

That simply means that amongst other fields of knowledge, Bharat was also trained and had become skilled in the art of minutely observing and correctly interpreting various omens and signals appearing in Nature. So therefore, what Guha Nishad had observed was observed by Bharat too, and Bharat's interpretation of the signs that appeared matched with that of Nishad. This is why Bharat nodded his affirmation when Nishad told him in Doha no. 234 what he felt about the omens that appeared; Bharat agreed with what Nishad had prophesized.

The second point that ought to be noted is this: Bharat had now become mentally prepared regarding two important things that had direct bearing on his mission. One was that his primary concern regarding the type of reception he would receive at the hands of Lord Ram, such as whether the Lord would show contempt for him and scold him for the mischief done by his mother Kaikeyi, or whether the Lord would decide not meet him at all and go somewhere else to avoid him before he even manages to reach the Lord's hermitage, or whether the Lord would accept his apologies, forgive him and assure him of his enduring love and affection like it had always been since their childhood, or whether, on the contrary, the Lord would receive him warmly and affectionately and reiterate his brotherly affection for him—all such issues that had bothered Bharat till now were settled in his favour. The omens and signs clearly indicated to Bharat that he would succeed in meeting Lord Ram, that he would be warmly and most affectionately received by the Lord, that their love and affection for each other remains the same as it always had been, that the Lord had no ill-feelings against him and he would accept Bharat's apologies and forgive him unconditionally, and that all worries and doubts that Bharat harbours in his mind are unwarranted and unfounded.

The other important point was that no matter how hard he tries, he won't be able to change destiny, and that he won't succeed in forcing or compelling Lord Ram to come back home to Ayodhya before the period of fourteen years end. So therefore, he must show patience and resilience and bear with the circumstances to become mentally prepared for the outcome of his mission.

To wit, the omens and signs forewarned Bharat to firm up and become prepared to face two things—that though the first part of his mission to seek forgiveness from Lord Ram and get an assurance from the Lord he knows that Bharat was innocent and not a party in his mother's wicked deeds, that the Lord's brotherly love and affection for Bharat has remained the same as it had always been, and that the Lord would ultimately accept the crown of Ayodhya, would succeed in totality, but the second part of his, which was to take Lord Ram back to Ayodhya immediately, would fail. This is absolutely clear in what Nishad had said in Doha no. 234, and now acknowledged by Bharat himself in the present verse.

Being forewarned of this possibility in advance of it actually happening was a sort of great help to Bharat because it gave him sufficient time to firm himself from the inside and get ready to bear with the shock of Lord Ram not accepting his request to return home when it actually came to hit him on his face.

To wit, these omens and signs gave Bharat sufficient time to prepare and firm himself mentally and emotionally to accept the cruel prospect of failure in his mission of taking Lord Ram with him to Ayodhya, as he would be returning home alone.

But this dark cloud had a brilliant silver lining too: and it was that now Bharat was assured that at last he will be warmly and affectionately received by Lord Ram,

Sita and Laxman; that his fears that the Lord would be hostile towards him, or that the Lord would leave the place and go away as soon as he came to know Bharat was approaching him, in order to avoid the latter, were unfounded. This was good and welcome news for Bharat. At last he felt happy that one of the basic reasons for his coming to the forest to meet Lord Ram—which was his desire to ask for forgiveness from the Lord and seek an assurance from him that his love and affection for his younger brother, who was honestly innocent, had not diminished even a wee whit—would be fulfilled.

Now we come to the third important point which is very subtle and can easily miss observation, but becomes apparent on close analysis. It is this: We have read earlier that sage Bharadwaj had instructed the twin deities known as Riddhi and Siddhi to arrange for giving full comfort to Bharat and his entourage at Prayag. These two deities are responsible for providing all means of physical comforts and pleasures to a creature in this world. So therefore, it is understood that when they themselves intervened and created a magical camp for the night halt of Bharat's party and arranged for their comfortable stay at the sage's hermitage, nothing was left wanting, and the best sorts of things and sights that give comfort and pleasure, things that would please the senses, were created to entertain Bharat. But what happened; what sort of effect they had on Bharat? We read that Bharat was as restless and agitated that night as he had all along been since he learnt that Lord Ram had been forced into exile in his name. To wit, all efforts of Riddhi and Siddhi to please Bharat had failed, and as soon as the next day dawned, Bharat packed up and hastily departed from Bharadwaj's hermitage and proceeded on his way to Chitrakoot. The charms and temptations of Riddhi and Siddhi had no effect on Bharat; he was forlorn, sad, distraught and distressed as before. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 213—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 216.}

All through his journey along the picturesque countryside as he passed by villages, lush green meadows and verdant forests, Bharat's mood was somber, sad and downtrodden.

But suddenly his mood would change now, as will be clear in the verses that follow herein below*, for the same Bharat begins to enjoy the pleasant sights and sounds as well as the charming environment of the forests and hills of Chitrakoot. {*Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 235—to Doha no. 236.}

So, what does it mean; what is its significance? It is this: Earlier Bharat was very worried; he was emotionally upset and mentally disturbed so much so that he remained absorbed and lost in his own thoughts so that he would pay no heed to his surroundings. Hence, the charming sights and pleasures that the physical world presented before him meant nothing to him. But the situation has suddenly changed now—the omens that appeared made it clear to him what he should expect for certain. This 'certainty' of what would happen helped to calm his nerves which were earlier on their tenterhooks. Further, the omens told him that the beginning would be good, though the end may not be in accordance to his liking. So Bharat felt happy that since it is now certain that he would get a chance to meet Lord Ram and plead his case, and that the Lord would warmly and affectionately receive him, then subsequently he was confident that he would succeed in persuading the Lord to fulfill his other wishes too. If the beginning is foretold to be good, the end can be somehow managed with skillful handling. This was a positive development that was reassuring and encouraging. Hence, Bharat's mind became calm and peaceful, which in turn enabled Bharat to

become sensitive and receptive to his surroundings—i.e. he began to enjoy the sights, the sounds and the pleasant environment of Chitrakoot around him.

By extension it means that when a person is at peace with himself, he would be able to enjoy life and its various charms; but if his mind is heavy with worries and tormented by fears, real or imaginary, he would be dulled and become insensitive.

Bharat's episode gives us three important lessons with regard to a person's spiritual well-being: One is that the best and easiest way to find abiding peace and happiness, to find stability of mind and tranquility of heart, is to devote ourselves to the Lord God and always turn towards 'him' to seek solace and succour as Bharat had done with respect to Lord Ram. The Lord is so nice, compassionate, gracious and forgiving that he would have already forgiven us by the time we actually ask forgiveness from him! Indeed and in all sooth, this is a very comforting thought.

The other lesson is this: Once we decide to turn our attention away from this mortal, mundane, delusory and gross world, and turn it towards Lord God instead, we must then not, never-ever, harbour any kind of doubt, fear, hesitation and perplexity in our mind. We must not doubt if the Lord would accept us, we must not doubt whether or not he would forgive us and grant redemption to us, we must not be worried about the fate of our souls, and so on and so forth, as these kinds of negative thoughts are unwarranted and baseless because the Lord is actually waiting for us with open arms to welcome us and redeem us, to grant us with the boon of deliverance, emancipation and salvation, with eternal peace, tranquility, bliss and abiding happiness, but unfortunately it is we who are avoiding him, it is we who doubt him, it is we who dither and hesitate!

So therefore, when we turn towards Lord God, we must feel excited and exhilarated and enthusiastic, but surely not hesitant and doubtful.

This is one error that Bharat had made, and which had robbed him of all the peace of his mind, making him gloomy and forlorn*1. On the one hand he was well aware of Lord Ram's loving and forgiving nature and says that he is sure that the Lord would unconditionally forgive him and accept him with warmth*2, but on the other hand and in the same breath he doubts and hesitates to move forward to meet the Lord, saying he feels uncertain as to how, if at all, will he be received by the Lord*3. But once good omens assured Bharat that his worries are unfounded and that good news awaits him*4, he cheered up and his steps acquired new vigour as he moved briskly as if flying, or as if a hungry man makes a dash for food*5. While earlier he was numb with worries and showed no interest in anything, he now begins to observe the beauty of the surrounding forests and hills of Chitrakoot*6. This is the same Bharat who was virtually dragging his feet forward and staggering on the way a while ago*7.

The third and not the least important is the lesson that after submitting ourselves before the Lord God, we must leave ourselves and our future, our destiny and our welfare and well-being in 'his' hand completely; let the Lord God decide what is good and right for us, for let us have faith and confidence in his judgment, because the Lord would certainly keep our interests in mind while making a decision. Since the Lord God is our Father, our Well-wisher and the best Friend, so therefore it is okay to tell him what we have in our mind, in our hearts just like a person confides with his worldly father, well-wisher and dear friend, and tells them what the matter is that has caused him worries. But after that, it's best to leave things and the final course of action in the Lord's hand instead of persisting on with our demands which might be not good for us in the long run, and therefore the all-knowing Lord God would not agree to accept it.

In the episode of Bharat we discover the same thing, and it gave him fame and peace of mind. In the beginning he was determined to bring Lord Ram back to Ayodhya*8; then when he met the Lord he poured out his heart like a child would do*9; but ultimately Bharat left it upon Lord Ram to make the final decision, and then he gladly accepted it*10.

{*1Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 222; (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 225.

*2Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-6 that precede Doha no. 183.

*3Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 233—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 234.

*4Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 234 along with Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it.

*5Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 235.

*6Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 236 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it.

*7Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 198; (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 225; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 234.

*8Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 182—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precede Doha no. 183.

*9Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 255—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 257; (ii) Doha no. 259—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 263; (iii) Doha no. 266—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 270; (iv) Doha no. 293 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it; (v) Doha no. 296—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 301; and (vi) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 307—to Doha no. 308.

*10Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 254 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it; (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 301; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 3-7 that precede Doha no. 307; (iv) Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 313; and (v) Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 306.}

²When a hungry person sees tasty food spread all around him, he would make a mad dash for it; he would rush forward to grab as much of the food and as quickly as he can. This analogy has been cleverly employed here to give us a picture of how Bharat had proceeded very swiftly, almost with a gallop, towards the actual spot of Lord Ram's dwelling in Chitrakoot. Whereas earlier he had walked with heavy and uncertain steps, almost seeming to drag his feet forward as he tottered and swayed like an intoxicated man*1, now his steps were quick and confident. He walked fast and with strident steps in order to reach Lord Ram's hermitage 'like a hungry man making a dash for food'. {*1Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 225; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precede Doha no. 234.}}

इति भीति जनु प्रजा दुखारी । त्रिबिध ताप पीडित ग्रह मारी ॥ ३ ॥

जाइ सुराज सुदेस सुखारी । होहिं भरत गति तेहि अनुहारी ॥ ४ ॥

īti bhīti janu prajā dukhārī. tribidha tāpa pīḍita graha mārī. 3.
jā'i surāja sudēsa sukhārī. hōhim bharata gati tēhi anuhārī. 4.

[The condition of Bharat, at his physical, emotional and mental level, has been described here by citing an example.]

Just like the case of the subjects of a kingdom who are suffering horribly (under an evil king) and are being tormented by a hostile gods, by the repeated appearance of evil omens that are harbingers of calamities¹, by the three great fears² that are further aggravated by malignant stars, --- (3)

--- Migrate to a kingdom where there is prosperity and all-round happiness as its king is good and caring, so was the case with Bharat too as he found solace, succour, comfort and peace at the sight of the forests and hills surrounding Chitrakoot³. (4)

[Note—¹Some of the evil signs that warn of fast approaching calamities are excessive rainfall or drought (which have the potential of wiping out entire civilizations and changing the contours of the landscape), appearance of vultures and locusts in the sky, howling of dogs and jackals, attack by rodents and termites (all portending death and destruction), dark clouds in the sky as if a huge dust storm was in the offing (as it may indicate an approaching army of an enemy), and so on and so forth.

²The three great fears and uncertainties caused by unfavourable gods and stars are related to one's spiritual well-being (Adhyatmic), worldly well-being (Bhautic), and destiny (Adi-Bhautic).

³The analogy is very obvious and apt. Bharat was under great emotional stress, and his physical condition was no better. So, when he saw good omens which indicated that he would soon meet Lord Ram, and the Lord would warmly and affectionately receive him, as well as the beauty of Nature surrounding Chitrakoot which was very soothing and comforting for the tormented soul of Bharat, he felt in the same way as the suffering citizens of a kingdom leave the place and migrate to another place where they find peace and happiness for themselves. All of a sudden Bharat's spirits were lifted, his sad and sullen mood and dejected heart found their comfort, and he felt very happy and calm.]

राम बास बन संपति भ्राजा । सुखी प्रजा जनु पाइ सुराजा ॥ ५ ॥
सचिव बिरागु बिबेकु नरेसू । बिपिन सुहावन पावन देसू ॥ ६ ॥
भट जम नियम सैल रजधानी । सांति सुमति सुचि सुंदर रानी ॥ ७ ॥
सकल अंग संपन्न सुराऊ । राम चरन आश्रित चित चाऊ ॥ ८ ॥

rāma bāsa bana sampati bhrājā. sukhī prajā janu pā'i surājā. 5.
saciva birāgu bibēku narēsū. bipina suhāvana pāvana dēsū. 6.
bhaṭa jama niyama saila rajadhānī. sānti sumati suci sundara rānī. 7.
sakala aṅga sampanna surā'ū. rāma carana āśrita cita cā'ū. 8.

[In these verses, the metaphor a good king and a prosperous kingdom which make the subjects of the king happy and contented is used to describe the atmosphere of peace and contentedness that prevailed all around the place where Lord Ram lived. By extension it also means that when a person becomes a devotee of the Lord, when the person begins to love the Lord, and forever feels the presence of the Lord near him or her, that person would always find happiness and peace wherever and in whatever condition he or she is.]

By the mere fact that Lord Ram lived in their midst, the forests and their surrounding hills (i.e. the forests and hills of Chitrakoot) were blessed with abundance of all sorts of bounties that Mother Nature could provide, just like the case of the subjects who live under a good king find an abundance of all sorts of happiness and prosperity surrounding them. (5)

In this symbolic ideal kingdom ruled by Lord Ram, and characterized by all-round happiness, peace and contentedness, the chief minister is represented by the virtue of 'Vairagya' (renunciation; dispassion and detachment from gross world and its equally gross material sense objects); the king himself is represented by the virtue of 'true spiritual knowledge and enlightenment' (known as 'Gyan' or gnosis); and the prosperous kingdom itself (here meaning the areas of Chitrakoot) is represented by virgin and pristine Nature with its green forests¹. (6)

In this kingdom, the virtues of 'Yam' and 'Niyam'² are the warriors who protect the citizens from outside attack; the hills (of Chitrakoot) represent the capital city of this kingdom; and the twin virtues 'Shanti' and 'Sumati' (respectively meaning the virtues of peace and tranquility on the one hand, and wisdom and refined intellect free from corruptions on the other hand) represent the two queens of the place. (7)

A king with these glorious virtues and supported by equally glorious aides (as described herein above) is indeed the ruler of an equally virtuous kingdom and its happy and contented subjects.

Verily indeed, in all sooth and without gainsay, if one seeks to live in such a glorious kingdom where there is abiding peace, contentedness and happiness, then one ought to surrender one's mind and focus it on the holy feet of Lord Ram.

[To wit, the easiest and the most certain way to find peace and happiness in one's life is to be devoted to Lord Ram, and seek solace and succour with him.] (8)

[Note—¹The beauty and glory of Chitrakoot has been praised by sage Valmiki when he advised Lord Ram to make it his dwelling for sometimes. Valmiki has also told the Lord that large number of sages, hermits and ascetics lived in the area of Chitrakoot to do penances and other spiritual practices, and the Lord's presence in their midst would make them feel blessed. This is clearly mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 132 along with Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede it.

This is at the physical level. At another level where symbolism is used to describe a higher state of existence of a creature, we talk about a kingdom ruled by a king representing Gyan and he is aided and advised by the virtue of Vairagya. To wit, in order to find true and abiding peace and happiness, one must practice these two virtues in one's life—viz. the virtues of Gyan and Vairagya. The sages, hermits and ascetics who lived in Chitrakoot were always happy and contented because they

practiced these two virtues which gave them peace at the spiritual level, while the calm surroundings of the forests gave them joy and peace of mind at the physical level.

A well planned and prosperous city will have large open spaces and gardens and forested areas. In this metaphor, Chitrakoot is one such city where the king is Lord Ram, and the contented citizens are the many sages, hermits and ascetics who lived there.

²‘Yam and Niyam’ have been described in Adhyatma Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Canto 7, verse no. 68-72 as the virtue of restraint of passions, sense organs and mind-intellect apparatus etc. (called ‘Yam’), and following the path of righteousness, probity, propriety and nobility (called Niyam).

The virtues of Yam and Niyam have been described in Skanda Puran, Bra. Dha. Maa. 5/19-21 in these words:-

—
सत्यं_क्षमाऽऽर्जवं_ध्यानमानृशंस्यमहिंसनम् ॥ दमः_प्रसादो_माधुर्यं_मृदुतेति_यमा_दश ।
शौचं_स्नानं_तपो_दानं_मौनेज्याध्ययनं_व्रतम् ॥ उपोषणोपस्थदण्डौ_दशैते_नियमाः_स्मृताः ॥
(स्कन्दपु०, ब्रा० ध० मा० ५/१९-२१) —

The ten ‘Yams’ are—(i) ‘Satya’ or truthfulness; (ii) ‘Kshama’ or forgiveness, (iii) ‘Asteya’ or not stealing, (iv) ‘Dhyaan’ or meditation and concentration of the mind, (v) ‘A-maan’ or being free from pride, ego and haughtiness, (vi) ‘Ahinsa’ meaning lack of cruelty and violence as well as having compassion and mercy, (vii) ‘Sanyam’ or restraint of mind and sense organs, (viii) ‘Dama’ or observing self restraint and enduring pain and suffering cheerfully, (ix) ‘Prasaad’ or to give charitably and accept whatever comes one’s way without yearning for more or complaining, (x) ‘Maadhura and Mridu’ or sweetness in demeanours as well as in words.

The ten ‘Niyams’ are—(i) ‘Shauch’ and (ii) ‘Snaan’ or cleanliness and purification of body and mind, ablution and bath to clean and purify the external and the internal body; (iii) ‘Tapa’ or doing austerities and penances, to suffer for some great and noble cause; (iv) ‘Daan’ or giving alms and making charities; (v) ‘Maun’ or keeping silence and not talking unnecessarily; (vi) ‘Yagya’ or doing sacrifices and other auspicious deeds; (vii) ‘Adhyayan’ or to read and study the scriptures etc. with full attention and interest; self study; (viii) ‘Vrat’ or observance of auspicious vows, diligence in following righteous deeds and noble virtues; (ix) ‘Upvaas’ or keeping fasts, abstaining from indulgences; (x) ‘Upastha Danda’ or observing strict celibacy and self restraint of sense organs and their desire for gratification. (Skanda Puran, Bra. Dha. Ma. 5/19-21.)

The *Varaaha Upanishad* of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its canto 5, verse nos. 12 ½ --14 also describes these Yams and Niyams.

The *Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad* of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 2, verse nos. 32-32 describes Yam and Niyam in the following way—“Non-violence, truthfulness, non stealing, celibacy, continence or abstinence from sexual indulgences and other pervert activities of the body and mind, mercy and compassion, simplicity and humility (32), forgiveness, patience and fortitude, restrained eating, and purity of mind, intellect and body—these are regarded as the ten supreme *Yams*. ‘Tapa’, meaning austerity, penance, sufferance and hardships endured for some noble cause, ‘Santosh’, meaning contentedness and satiety, to have belief on the doctrines and

teachings of the scriptures, to make charities and donations, the remembrance of the supreme Lord known as ‘Hari’ and devotedly serving him and contemplating upon him¹ (33), hearing Vedanta (the preaching of Upanishads), to have modesty, honour, dignity, self respect and shame, to have wisdom and intelligence, to repeat the holy Mantras or divine, ethereal words of the Lord, and to keep stern religious vows and observe fasting—these are ten *Niyams*.”

According to *Mandal Brahmin Upanishad* of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, Brahman 1, section 1, verse nos. 3-4, the Yam and Niyam are the following—

“Verse no. 3 = To overcome the notion of feeling (excessive) heat and cold (and getting agitated about them), to have control over the urge to eat and sleep (more than necessary), to remain ever calm and tranquil (even during the greatest of adversities), to remain unwavering and steady (like a mountain and the flame of a lamp protected from the wind), and to be able to exercise control over the sense organs (of perception and action)—these are categorised as the various ‘Yams’ (3).

“Verse no. 4 = Devotion towards one’s moral preceptor, teacher and guide called a Guru, dedication and diligent pursuit of the path which is righteous, auspicious and noble, contentedness with whatever is available, residence in a secluded and serene place that gives peace, solitude, tranquility and calmness, non-attachment with and indifference towards anything and anyone in this world, diversion of the mind from the sensual pleasures and charming objects of the materialistic world, no expectation of any reward from any deed done or action taken, and a sense of exemplary renunciation—all these are the various ‘Niyams’ to be followed by the seekers of true knowledge of the Atma (4).”]

दो०. जीति मोह महिपालु दल सहित बिबेक भुआलु ।

करत अकंटक राजु पुरँ सुख संपदा सुकालु ॥ २३५ ॥

dōhā.

jīti mōha mahipālu dala sahita bibēka bhu'ālu.

karata akaṇṭaka rāju puram̐ sukha sampadā sukālu. 235.

In this way, a righteous king representing the virtue of ‘Gyan’ (gnosis; truthful spiritual knowledge and enlightenment marked by self-realisation) has established an abiding reign of peace, tranquility, prosperity and happiness in a kingdom by conquering the king who represented the negative trait of ‘Moha’ (delusions, worldly attachments) along with the entire horde of his aides¹. (Doha no. 235)

[Note—¹Moha and its many forms with their negative impact on a creature have been enumerated in detail by the saintly crow Kaagbhusund in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 70—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 72.

In these above referred verses, Kaagbhusund also reiterates that the only way to overcome the negative consequences of Moha is to take refuge with Lord Ram, for the Lord is like the sun where darkness representing by Moha simply can’t survive.

How can ‘Moha’ be overcome? The answer is: ‘by having Gyan’. And what would be the benefit of this endeavour? It would be a life of abiding contentedness, peace, happiness and joy for the person concerned.]

चौ०. बन प्रदेस मुनि बास घनेरे । जनु पुर नगर गाउँ गन खेरे ॥ १ ॥

बिपुल बिचित्र बिहग मृग नाना । प्रजा समाजु न जाइ बखाना ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

bana pradēsa muni bāsa ghanērē. janu pura nagara gā'um̐ gana khērē. 1.

bipula bicitra bihaga mṛga nānā. prajā samāju na jā'i bakhānā. 2.

[In the following verses, we read about the enchanting beauty of Chitrakoot, about its mesmerizing sights and sounds.]

In the extended areas of the forest there are many dwellings and hermitages of different sages and hermits that represent the many small and big towns as well as villages and hamlets that are spread across the vast realm of the symbolic kingdom mentioned earlier (in the previous verses). (1)

It is not possible to describe how abundant and colourful are the forms of wild life represented by animals and birds of different species that abound in the forest who represent the countless happy and carefree people of different denominations and societies, of different castes, professions and races, who live and roam about freely and fearlessly in the many towns, villages and hamlets that are scattered all over that kingdom. (2)

खगहा करि हरि बाघ बराहा । देखि महिष बृष साजु सराहा ॥ ३ ॥

बयरु बिहाइ चरहिं एक संगी । जहँ तहँ मनहुँ सेन चतुरंगी ॥ ४ ॥

khagahā kari hari bāgha barāhā. dēkhi mahiṣa br̥ṣa sāju sarāhā. 3.

bayaru bihā'i carahiṁ ēka saṅgā. jaham̐ taham̐ manahum̐ sēna caturaṅgā. 4.

The fascinating variety of wild animals that roam around freely in this forest, such as wild hares, elephants, lions, tigers, boars, buffaloes and bulls, evoke admiration from the beholder. (3)

They abandon their natural animosity towards each other, and live amiably and practice cordial relationship with each other as they roam about freely and fearlessly. These animals and their hordes represent the four wings of the army of that kingdom (that stand guard and keep vigil everywhere)¹. (4)

[Note—¹The four wings of an ancient army consisted of infantry, cavalry, chariots and elephants. The soldiers in an army come from varied backgrounds: they belong to different castes and families, have different attitudes towards life, different religious backgrounds, different education, and different mental and emotional setups. But as members of a well-disciplined army they are one and indistinguishable from one another; they eat together and live together, forming a cohesive group or a society in which all members have cordial and brotherly relationship with each other.

Similarly, though the animals of different species tend to live in separate groups as they normally do not prefer to mingle with each other so easily and

comfortably, yet the situation in the forests of Chitrakoot was different because Lord Ram lived here. The mere presence of the Lord had a remarkable positive effect even on animals and birds, for they abandoned their natural animosity and hostility towards each other, but lived happily and amiably as if they belonged to the same family.

Likewise, in a kingdom where the king is good and noble, there is not only an abundance of material prosperity and happiness all around, but his subjects too live like friends and members of a large and extended family, helping each other in times of need, and sharing their joys and sorrows together.]

झरना झरहिं मत गज गाजहिं । मनहुं निसान बिबिधि बिधि बाजहिं ॥ ५ ॥
चक चकोर चातक सुक पिक गन । कूजत मंजु मराल मुदित मन ॥ ६ ॥

jharanā jharahim matta gaja gājahim. manahum̐ nisāna bibidhi bidhi bājahim. 5.

caka cakōra cātaka suka pika gana. kūjata manju marāla mudita mana. 6.

The sound of waterfalls and trumpeting elephants resembled the sound of musical instruments such as drums and trumpets that are played at various locations in a prosperous city that is always in a celebratory mode. (5)

Delighted birds of all kinds of feathers and species, such as Chakva (ruddy goose), Chakor (Indian red-legged partridge), Chatak (sparrow hawk), Suka (parrot), Pika (cuckoo) and Maraala (swan), are frolicking around and chattering away merrily. (6)

अलिगन गावत नाचत मोरा । जनु सुराज मंगल चहु ओरा ॥ ७ ॥
बेलि बिटप तृन सफल सफूला । सब समाजु मुद मंगल मूला ॥ ८ ॥

aligana gāvata nācata mōrā. janu surāja maṅgala cahu ōrā. 7.
bēli biṭapa tr̥na saphala saphūlā. saba samāju muda maṅgala mūlā. 8.

Groups of bumble-bees are humming and buzzing around, while peacocks dance in merry abundance, as if there is rejoicing and merry-making everywhere in a kingdom where the virtues of cheerfulness, happiness and joy reign supreme. (7)

Nay, even the creepers, the trees and the twigs show signs of contentedness by bearing colourful forms, fruits of various kinds and abundance of greenery.

Verily indeed, the overall atmosphere of the areas around Chitrakoot was heavenly and peaceful, one that was marked by cheerfulness and joy that comes to a kingdom that has prosperity and abundance of everything. (8)

दो०. राम सैल सोभा निरखि भरत हृदयँ अति पेमु ।
तापस तप फलु पाइ जिमि सुखी सिरानें नेमु ॥ २३६ ॥

dōhā.

rāma saila sōbhā nirakhi bharata hr̥dayam̐ ati pēmu.
tāpasa tapa phalu pā'i jimi sukhī sirānēm nēmu. 236.

Watching the heavenly charm and beauty of Lord Ram's mountain ("rāma saila"; here meaning the hills of Chitrakoot where Lord Ram lived), Bharat's heart felt exhilarated as if an ascetic, who had been doing Tapa (practicing austerities and penances) for a long time, has been successful in achieving the reward of his efforts, which makes him feel excessively happy, contented and blissful¹. (Doha no. 236)

[Note—¹Bharat was on the threshold of achieving success in his mission to reach Chitrakoot and meet Lord Ram. He felt contented and happy that his mission was about to end successfully. The auspicious omens he had just observed in Doha no. 234 gave him peace of mind and assured him that things have turned in his favour. So therefore, Bharat felt very glad.]

[PAUSE 5 FOR A NINE-DAY RECITATION]

[PAUSE 20 FOR A THIRTY-DAY RECITATION]

चौ०. तब केवट ऊँचें चढ़ि धाई । कहेउ भरत सन भुजा उठाई ॥ १ ॥
नाथ देखिअहिं बिटप बिसाला । पाकरि जंबु रसाल तमाला ॥ २ ॥
caupā'ī.

taba kēvaṭa ūm̐cēm caḍhi dhā'ī. kahē'u bharata sana bhujā uṭhā'ī. 1.
nātha dēkhi'ahim̐ biṭapa bisālā. pākari jambu rasāla tamālā. 2.

Then Kewat ("kēvaṭa"; i.e. Guha Nishad who was the chieftain of the boatman community) swiftly ran up a raised ground (i.e. high mound or a small hillock) that overlooked the place where Lord Ram had his dwelling.

Once there he could see the Lord's hermitage nestled in the midst of lush green trees. So he lifted his arms excitedly and told Bharat --- (1)

'Oh Lord, I can behold a grove of large trees, such as the Indian fig tree (pākari), black plumb trees (jambu), mango trees (rasāla) as well as black catechu plants (tamālā). (2)

जिन्ह तरुबरन्ह मध्य बटु सोहा । मंजु बिसाल देखि मनु मोहा ॥ ३ ॥
नील सघन पल्लव फल लाला । अबिरल छाहँ सुखद सब काला ॥ ४ ॥

jinha tarubaranha madhya baṭu sōhā. man̐ju bisāla dēkhi manu mōhā. 3.
nīla saghana pallava phala lālā. abirala chāham̐ sukhada saba kālā. 4.

Surrounded by these trees, in their middle, is a magnificent and stately banyan tree (baṭu sōhā) which looks so nice that its sight gives joy to the beholder's Mana (heart and mind). (3)

This tree has dense foliage with leaves that are dark in colour; its fruits are red and it has a shade that covers a wide area around it.

The tree, with its dense foliage and an extended shade, provides cool comfort the whole year round, in all its seasons. (4)

मानहुँ तिमिर अरुनमय रासी । बिरची बिधि सँकेलि सुषमा सी ॥ ५ ॥
ए तरु सरित समीप गोसाँई । रघुबर परनकुटी जहँ छाई ॥ ६ ॥

mānahum̐ timira arunamaya rāsī. biracī bidhi sam̐kēli suṣamā sī. 5.
ē taru sarita samīpa gōsām̐. raghubara paranakuṭī jaham̐ chā'ī. 6.

The general impression that one gets by looking at this tree and the shade it provides is as if the Creator (bidhi) has used two opposite characters, viz. darkness and sunlight, to create a unique combination of an environment symbolized by that which exists around this banyan tree¹. (5)

Oh Lord (gōsām̐)! These trees are situated near the banks of a river, and it is here that Lord Ram has established his dwelling by erecting a thatched hut. (6)

[Note—¹The 'darkness' is represented by the dense foliage and the shadow of the tree that provides shade over a large circle around the banyan tree.

The 'sunlight' is represented by the surrounding areas which are sunlit and bright.

So therefore, the circle formed by the shadow of the tree is very cool and completely shaded from light, while the area outside the circle is brightly lit by the sun.]

तुलसी तरुबर बिबिध सुहाए । कहूँ कहूँ सियँ कहूँ लखन लगाए ॥ ७ ॥
बट छायाँ बेदिका बनाई । सियँ निज पानि सरोज सुहाई ॥ ८ ॥

tulasī tarubara bibidha suhā'ē. kahum̐ kahum̐ siyam̐ kahum̐ lakhana lagā'ē. 7.
baṭa chāyām̐ bēdikā banā'ī. siyam̐ nija pāni sarōja suhā'ī. 8.

Many kinds of Tulsi shrubs (the Basil plant) have been planted by Sita and Laxman here and there at that place. (7)

Under the shade of the banyan tree there is a beautiful platform that has been designed, erected and given final touches by Sita with her own hands. (8)

दो०. जहाँ बैठि मुनिगन सहित नित सिय रामु सुजान ।

सुनहिं कथा इतिहास सब आगम निगम पुरान ॥ २३७ ॥

dōhā.

jahām^१ baiṭhi munigana sahita nita siya rāmu sujāna.
sunahim kathā itihāsa saba āgama nigama purāna. 237.

It is on this platform that the honourable Lord Ram sits, surrounded by the many sages and hermits who come to visit him daily. During such meetings, the Lord hears stories and legends from the ancient scriptures such as Itishas, Purans, Vedas and Tantras being narrated and discussed by the visiting guests.’ (Doha no. 237)

[Note—Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 141 where we read that Lord Ram used to narrate stories from ancient scriptures to Sita and Laxman who would listen to them attentively and enjoy it.

This indicates that Lord Ram kept himself busy by attending his honoured guests such as sages, hermits and ascetics who visited him regularly, and the Lord would hear narrations from many scriptures during such meetings, and at other times he would sit with Sita and Laxman and tell them such stories himself.]

चौ०. सखा बचन सुनि बिटप निहारी । उमगे भरत बिलोचन बारी ॥ १ ॥

करत प्रनाम चले दोउ भाई । कहत प्रीति सारद सकुचाई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sakhā bacana suni biṭapa nihārī. umagē bharata bilōcana bārī. 1.
karata pranāma calē dō'u bhāī. kahata prīti sārada sakucāī. 2.

Hearing these encouraging words of his friend (Guha Nishad), Bharat looked in the direction of the grove of trees, especially the banyan tree¹. This sight was very welcome, and beholding it Bharat felt so emotional and filled with exhilaration that tears welled up in his eyes. (1)

The two brothers (Bharat and Shatrughan) immediately bowed their heads in reverence in the direction of Lord Ram’s hermitage, and started to move swiftly in that direction.

The intensity and depth of their love and affection were so profound during those moments that even goddess Saraswati (sārada) would hesitate to attempt to describe it (because though she is the patron goddess of knowledge, speech and words, yet she felt herself incompetent to describe and do justice to the purity and the dimension of love and affection that sprouted in the heart of the two brothers when they saw Lord Ram’s hermitage and made a dash for it)². (2)

[Note—¹When Nishad went up the hillock or the high mound to look around and saw the grove where Lord Ram had his dwelling, he called out to Bharat to come hither. Bharat ran up and stood alongside Nishad to look in the direction in which the latter had raised his hand to point the exact spot with his fingers. Lo and behold, what Bharat saw at a little distance thrilled him to his core; he saw Lord Ram’s hermitage right there. It was an unforgettable moment for Bharat, and he felt that at last his

prayers have been answered, that at last he has come to the doorstep of his beloved Lord's hermitage at Chitrakoot. It was a highly satisfying and emotional moment for Bharat, like the case of the Creator creating favourable circumstances so that a lover's affection for his beloved is requited.

Say, what more would Bharat want now? In this context, refer to Doha no. 236 herein above.

²An important point to note here is that in the final leg of the mission of Bharat to reach Lord Ram's hermitage after a long and arduous journey, only three persons would reach there first—viz. Bharat, Shatrughan and Guha Nishad. We would read soon that after the initial emotional moments when all the brothers meet and embrace each other, and Lord Ram affectionately meets his old friend Nishad too*1, after which Bharat pays his obeisance to Sita as well as the sages, hermits and ascetics who were present at that moment in the Lord's hermitage*2, Guha Nishad would tell Lord Ram that a large group of sad and distressed citizens, led by the family's guru (sage Vasistha) and the queen mothers, were waiting at a distance*3, hearing which Lord Ram immediately went forward to receive them*4.

{Refer: *1Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 240—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 242.

*2Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-7 that precede Doha no. 242.

*3Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 242 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it.

*4Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 243.}]

हरषहिं निरखि राम पद अंका । मानहुँ पारसु पायउ रंका ॥ ३ ॥

रज सिर धरि हियँ नयनन्हि लावहिं । रघुबर मिलन सरिस सुख पावहिं ॥ ४ ॥

haraṣahim nirakhi rāma pada aṅkā. mānahum̐ pārasu pāya'u raṅkā. 3.
raja sira dhari hiyaṁ̐ nayanānhi lāvahim̐. raghubara milana sarisa sukha
pāvahim̐. 4.

On the way to the dwelling of Lord Ram, they (Bharat, Shatrughan and Nishad) could see the footprints of the Lord marked on the ground here and there. This sight made them exhilarated in their hearts as if a pauper has discovered the philosopher's stone (because this sight would send thrill through the pauper's entire being, as now onwards his poverty would be a thing of the past)¹. (3)

As soon as any such footprint of Lord Ram were seen, Bharat and his companions would pick up the dust of those marks and put it on their heads, touch their eyelids with it, and then clasp it to their bosoms. This gesture made Bharat and others feel as happy as if they have met Lord Ram himself in a symbolic way². (4)

[Note—¹It implies that while moving towards Lord Ram's hermitage, the three, Bharat, Shatrughan and Guha Nishad, had their eyes fixed on the ground, because otherwise it would have been impossible for them to see footmarks on the soil. A similar thing had happened earlier too when Bharat had become thrilled at the sight of

Lord Ram's footprints on the ground—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 199.

From a more practical point of view however, the primary reason why they had their attention fixed on the ground ahead as they walked towards the Lord's hermitage, is that it was a rough mountain path passing through a rough terrain of an uninhabited and dense forest. One must be very careful while walking through a hazardous path in an uncharted territory of a wild forest and a mountainous region, for there were all sorts of dangers and hurdles on the way, such as wild creepers, dense undergrowth, all sorts of thorns, stones of all shapes and sizes, insects, worms, snakes and other poisonous reptiles, as well as narrow ridges, crevices, precipices, soft and slippery ground, and so on and so forth, which needed special vigilance and to be carefully treaded upon in order to avoid some sudden accident from happening. This extra carefulness and attention enabled the three to discern the footprints of Lord Ram that were marked on the ground.

How could they know that these marks were of the Lord? Well, Guha Nishad was a tribal, and by training he had developed the knack and the instinct to distinguish between different types of footprints marked on the ground. It is a common thing for forest-dwelling tribes to see pugmarks on the ground and easily tell whether a lion or a tiger or a wild boar or an elephant, for that matter which other wild animal has passed that way. Since Guha Nishad was Bharat's guide from the very beginning^{*1}, here too he led the way. So therefore, perceiving Lord Ram's footprint was easy for this small group consisting of Nishad in the lead, followed by Bharat and Shatrughan.

{*1Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 203; (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 216; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 221; (iv) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 233.}

²A similar idea is expressed earlier in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 199.]

देखि भरत गति अकथ अतीवा । प्रेम मगन मृग खग जड़ जीवा ॥ ५ ॥
सखहि सनेह बिबस मग भूला । कहि सुपंथ सुर बरषहि फूला ॥ ६ ॥

dēkhi bharata gati akatha atīvā. prēma magana mṛga khaga jaṛa jīvā. 5.
sakhahi sanēha bibasa maga bhūlā. kahi supantha sura baraṣahiṁ phūlā. 6.

Observing the immensity of Bharat's love and affection as well as his emotional condition of Bharat that was indescribable, all those who beheld him, both the animate creatures such as animals and birds, as well as the inanimate things (such as trees and creepers) became overwhelmed with emotions themselves¹. (5)

The condition of all the three (Bharat, Shatrughan and Guha Nishad) was the same, so much so that even Nishad forgot in which direction he was to proceed and show Bharat the path ahead.

[To wit, Nishad was so overwhelmed with emotions that he lost his bearing and the sense of direction like an intoxicated man. So though he was to lead the group and was supposed to show the proper way ahead to the two brothers, he himself got lost and did not know in which direction to proceed ahead.]

When the gods observed this dilemma, they graciously decided to help by showering flowers from the sky on the path that would lead to Lord Ram's hermitage. This gave a hint to Nishad about the path he was supposed to follow which would take him and his companions to Lord Ram's dwelling². (6)

[Note—¹Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 217 also.

²It's a fantastic imagery. Let us remember that Nishad, Bharat and Shatrughan are walking through a dense forest path passing through hills full of wild animals. It is not a paved highway or an avenue of a city; it is un-chartered and wild territory. There are huge trees, dense mesh of wild creepers, and thick undergrowth spread all around. Probably sunlight also found it difficult to penetrate through thick foliage of large-tall trees. In this wilderness with its harsh environment, one can well imagine how someone would feel if he gets lost.

Help came from the gods who showered flowers on a narrow stretch of land extending in a particular direction, resembling a footpath through the dense forest ground, thereby pointing the direction in which Nishad should take Bharat and Shatrughan forward.

This covering of a narrow strip of ground, that resembled a footpath through the forest, with flowers was a gracious gesture of the gods who were symbolically spreading a 'red-carpet welcome' to Bharat as he proceeded towards Lord Ram's hermitage. Remember that these are the same gods who did not like Bharat meeting Lord Ram, and they had wanted to prevent it from happening. First they sought help from their guru, sage Brihaspati, and when he sternly rebuked the gods for their negative thinking regarding Bharat*1, they approached goddess Saraswati, who too refused to help*2. In both the cases, however, we read that the gods realized that they were in the wrong, that Bharat was truly and doubtlessly a pious soul devoted to Lord Ram, and therefore he deserves highest honour, respect and reverence, but surely not jealousy and facing hindrances in his desire to meet Lord Ram and surrender before him*3.

{*1Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 217—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 220.

*2Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 294—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 295.

*3Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 220; (ii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 265—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 266.}

So therefore, the gods decided that it was now the time for them to show their respect to Bharat by helping him achieve his objective rather than play the role of a devil by making him get lost in the wilderness.

Here once again we draw a wonderful lesson: it is that if we are headed towards Lord God, then even the most powerful forces in this world would feel guilty if they think to create hindrance in our path. On the contrary, even the gods would come out to help us and show us the correct and the right path in case we somehow get lost in the way, but only as long as we are determined to attain our spiritual objective with a clean conscience and a pure heart.

In this context we have read earlier also that the gods have showered flowers on the path upon which Bharat walked, in order to show their respects to him, as well as to soften the hard ground below Bharat's feet—apropos: Ram Charit Manas,

Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 216 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it. So it was nothing new.]

निरखि सिद्ध साधक अनुरागे । सहज सनेहु सराहन लागे ॥ ७ ॥
होत न भूतल भाउ भरत को । अचर सचर चर अचर करत को ॥ ८ ॥

nirakhi sid'dha sād'haka anurāgē. sahaja sanēhu sarāhana lāgē. 7.
hōta na bhūtala bhā'u bharata kō. acara sacara cara acara karata kō. 8.

When Siddhas (mystics) and Sadhaks (spiritual seekers) (who lived a life of seclusion in the forests) saw this condition (of Bharat, Shatrughan and Nishad), they began to praise them and show their natural affection for them¹. (7)

Had Bharat not taken birth in this world, there would not have been any example which would show how the virtue of love and affection can have an enduring effect on all entities in this creation, whether they are animate beings (i.e. living beings) or inanimate things (such as trees), and how animate beings would turn so numb with emotions that they would resemble inanimate things, while inanimate things would become so responsive that they would resemble animate beings²? (8)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 3-6 that precede Doha no. 217; (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 220.

²A similar idea has been expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 233.

When animals, birds and country folks saw Bharat, they were very much influenced by him so much so that they almost lost awareness of themselves and stood numbed as if intoxicated by the symbolic wine of love and affection that Bharat had to offer them. In the same vein, elements of Nature, which are inanimate, also showed their happiness and went out of their way to help Bharat as much as they could. In this context, refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 216—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 217; (ii) Doha no. 221—to Doha no. 223.

In the forests and hills of Chitrakoot where Lord Ram lived, animals and birds lived a merry and happy life; all species lived amiably, and discarded their natural animosity and hostility towards each other, showing how the glorious virtue of having love and affection for each other can have a binding effect even on those who are born to be inimical towards each other. This is clear in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 235—to Doha no. 236.]

दो०. पेम अमिअ मंदरु बिरहु भरतु पयोधि गँभीर ।
मथि प्रगटेउ सुर साधु हित कृपासिंधु रघुबीर ॥ २३८ ॥
dōhā.

pēma ami'a mandaru birahu bharatu payōdhi gambhīra.
mathi pragaṭē'u sura sādhu hita kṛpāsindhu raghubīra. 238.

[A lot of symbolism and metaphors have been used in this Doha.]

In order to benefit sages, saintly persons and pious souls who are devoted to the Lord and wish to find an easy path to attain bliss and happiness, Lord Ram, who is an ocean of mercy, compassion and grace, employed the ancient method of churning of the celestial ocean that produced nectar meant for the gods.

With this objective in mind, the Lord decided to produce ‘nectar’ represented by the glorious virtue of love and affection that Bharat exemplified. For this purpose, Lord Ram used the grief of separation from him that Bharat suffered from as the ‘churning-rod’ symbolising the mountain known as ‘Mandara’ that was used to churn the ancient ocean to produce nectar for the gods, and with it the Lord ‘churned the ocean’ represented by the immensity of sadness and distress that had filled the heart of Bharat.

The resultant behaviour of Bharat, the way he responded and acted once he came to know that the Lord was sent to the forest on his account, and till the end when he would live a self-exiled life of a hermit throughout the period when Lord Ram was in the forest, would indeed serve as a benchmark for other devotees to emulate; they are expected to follow Bharat’s example if they wish to attain blissfulness and beatitude by having devotion for the Lord¹. (Doha no. 238)

[Note—¹The idea is very simple. Bharat showed what true devotion and love for Lord Ram (representing Lord God) is. He was offered the crown of a great kingdom, and his guru, mother and ministers too insisted that he accept it, but Bharat flatly refused, saying that his true happiness and welfare lies in going to meet Lord Ram wherever he is. He had defied even his own guru, sage Vasistha, for the sake of going to meet Lord Ram, and miraculously no offense was taken. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 174—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 184.}

Remember what is said in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 185 that “anything or anybody that creates hindrance in one’s way to reach Lord Ram, such thing or person should better burn and perish”.

Later on, sage Bharadwaj too tried to tempt Bharat with extraordinary material comforts and pleasures, but Bharat remained unaffected. To wit, a true devotee should not be distracted from his chosen goal of attaining Lord Ram; no temptations should be so strong as to waylay him. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 213—to Doha no. 215.}

Then we read about the way Bharat would react when he saw any sign related to Lord Ram and even heard someone uttering the Lord’s name; we also read how completely possessed he was with the single thought of Lord Ram so much so that nothing else concerned him. He had lost his appetite and interest in everything of this world. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 178; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 182; (iii) Doha no. 198—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 199; (iv) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 201; (v) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 212; (vi) Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 220.}

Finally, when he became certain that he would succeed in meeting Lord Ram, he dashed towards the Lord’s hermitage like a hungry man making a mad dash for tasty food (apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 235).]

चौ०. सखा समेत मनोहर जोटा । लखेउ न लखन सघन बन ओटा ॥ १ ॥
भरत दीख प्रभु आश्रमु पावन । सकल सुमंगल सदन सुहावन ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sakhā samēta manōhara jōṭā. lakhē'u na lakhana saghana bana oṭā. 1.
bharata dīkha prabhu āśramu pāvana. sakala sumāṅgala sadanu suhāvana. 2.

Meanwhile, Laxman (who was keeping strict vigil and was on the lookout for Bharat's arrival) could not see the pair of brothers (Bharat and Shatrughan) along with their friend (Guha Nishad), although they were on the threshold of the Lord's hermitage, because the view was obstructed or screened by the density of large trees and their thick foliage that surrounded them. (1)

But Bharat, on the other hand, could easily see the Lord's auspicious hermitage, which was lovely to behold and most holy¹. (2)

[Note—¹Lord Ram's dwelling was in the middle of a clearing in the dense forest. It had trees and shrubs planted all around it by way of a surrounding hedge, to demarcate the area and protect it from predators, such as wild animals. In the center of this clearing was a large banyan tree where the Lord's thatched hut was present. Being in an open space, the place was well lit by sunlight.

On the contrary, the place where Bharat and others were was in the thickly covered part of the forest where there were large trees with thick trunks, dense foliage and abundance of creepers and undergrowth, where sunlight rarely would peep in—i.e. the place was dark and hidden from view with respect to the Lord's hermitage.

This is why Bharat and his companions could see Lord Ram's hermitage easily, but Laxman could not perceive them approaching.]

करत प्रबेस मिटे दुख दावा । जनु जोगीं परमारथु पावा ॥ ३ ॥
देखे भरत लखन प्रभु आगे । पूँछे बचन कहत अनुरागे ॥ ४ ॥
सीस जटा कटि मुनि पट बाँधें । तून कसें कर सरु धनु काँधें ॥ ५ ॥

karata prabēsa miṭē dukha dāvā. janu jōgīm paramārathu pāvā. 3.
dēkhē bharata lakhana prabhu āgē. pūṁchē bacana kahata anurāgē. 4.
sīsa jaṭā kaṭi muni paṭa bāṁdhēm. tūna kasēm kara saru dhanu kām̐dhēm. 5.

No sooner Bharat entered the hermitage of Lord Ram, but the fire of his sorrows and grief that had been scorching him for a long time was immediately doused, just like the case of an ascetic who suddenly finds immense bliss, peace and comfort as soon as his spiritual efforts to attain enlightenment bear fruit, and he becomes God-realised. (3)

Bharat saw that Laxman was standing in front of Lord Ram, and he was affectionately answering the Lord's queries¹. (4)

Bharat saw that Laxman had a crown of matted hairs on his head, wore clothes that are worn by hermits, had a quiver tied around his waist, held an arrow in his hand, and the bow was hung on his shoulder². (5)

[Note—¹Once Lord Ram became aware that Bharat was fast approaching his hermitage*1, he had asked Laxman to be on the lookout and stand guard so that he may inform the Lord as soon as Bharat came near. But Laxman could not see Bharat until he had actually entered the hermitage because of the density of the surrounding forest*2. Meanwhile, Lord Ram kept asking Laxman for any sign of Bharat, and the two were discussing the matter just when Bharat entered the hermitage almost unnoticed as said in verse no. 3 herein above.

{*1Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 226—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 227.

*2 Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that follows Doha no. 238 herein above.}

²The beauteous and charming form of Laxman as a hermit that has been described here is also referred to earlier in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 115 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it.]

बेदी पर मुनि साधु समाजू । सीय सहित राजत रघुराजू ॥ ६ ॥
बलकल बसन जटिल तनु स्यामा । जनु मुनि बेष कीन्ह रति कामा ॥ ७ ॥
कर कमलनि धनु सायकु फेरत । जिय की जरनि हरत हंसि हेरत ॥ ८ ॥

bēdī para muni sādhu samājū. sīya sahita rājata raghurājū. 6.
balakala basana jaṭila tanu syāmā. janu muni bēṣa kīnha rati kāmā. 7.
kara kamalani dhanu sāyaku phērata. jiya kī jarani harata haṁsi hērata. 8.

On the platform in the center were seated Lord Ram and Sita surrounded by sages, hermits and ascetics (who came regularly to visit Lord Ram)¹. (6)

Lord Ram was attired in clothes made from leaves and the bark of the birch tree, and had a dark complexion. The magnificent sight of Lord Ram sitting with Sita was reminiscent of Kamdeo and his consort Rati². (7)

The Lord held his arrow and bow in his hands while he subtly smiled and slowly moved his fingers over them, as if caressing them. This sight appeared so encouraging for a devotee because it indicated that the Lord is all ready to eliminate all sorts of torments and sufferings that may be causing heartburn to his devotee*.

[*This verse can be interpreted and read as follows also: “The Lord smiled subtly as he moved his fingers over the arrow and the bow which he held in his hands, as if the Lord wanted to hint to his devotees that his glance was enough to eliminate all their worries and heartburn, and in case more effort was needed on part of the Lord, then he was ready with his arrow and bow to protect the interest of his devotees.”] (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 237 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it.

²Kamdeo is the patron deity of beauty and charm, while Rati is his consort and equally beautiful to behold. The beauty of Lord Ram and Laxman as hermits has been described earlier too when Lord Ram, Laxman and Sita were on their way to the forest and passed by villages and hamlets that fell on the way, where amazed villagers and country folks would behold their charming forms and could not contain their joy and happiness at the sight. Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 115—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 117.]

दो०. लसत मंजु मुनि मंडली मध्य सीय रघुचंदु ।
ग्यान सभाँ जनु तनु धरें भगति सच्चिदानंदु ॥ २३९ ॥

dōhā.

lasata manju muni maṇḍalī madhya sīya raghucandu.
gyāna sabhām̐ janu tanu dharēm bhagati saccidānandu. 239.

The fascinating sight of Sita and Lord Ram (raghucandu)¹ sitting in the midst of sages and hermits was charming to behold, and it resembled an assembly of wise and enlightened men focusing their attention on the central point of their spiritual pursuit which was to have ‘devotion’ (bhagati) for the Lord who represented the ultimate ‘Truth’ that granted ‘bliss, tranquility, beatitude and felicity to the soul’ (saccidānandu)². (Doha no. 239)

[Note—¹The word “raghucandu” is very interesting here. It means different things in different context. Some of the many interpretations are the following;

If Sita is regarded as Chakor, the bird that is so enamoured of the moon that it keeps its gaze fixed on the latter in the night sky, then Lord Ram, the Lord of the Raghu family who ruled over the kingdom of Ayodhya, is the ‘Moon’ (raghucandu).

If the assembly of sages and hermits that were seated around Lord Ram are to be regarded as stars in the sky, then Lord Ram, the Lord of the Raghus, is the ‘Moon’, for the latter is the brightest and the prominent body that is surrounded by countless stars in the night sky.

From a purely spiritual and metaphysical perspective, if the surrounding world is like a dark night, then Lord Ram is like the full moon that eliminates darkness. In this metaphor, Sita would be the moon’s light because she always accompanies Lord Ram, and it is impossible to imagine Lord Ram without Sita even as it is impossible to imagine a full moon without its soothing light.

²This part of the verse is another metaphoric interpretation of what has been said above.

The main objective of all religious endeavours is to attain spiritual peace and bliss, which can only be attained by pursuing the path of devotion. Similarly, the main aim of studying of scriptures and gaining knowledge, known as acquisition of ‘Gyan’ (gnosis, wisdom), is to become self-realised and attain enlightenment that comes with the knowledge of the ultimate Truth, which in turn grants bliss, tranquility, beatitude and peace—or Anand.

These two, Bhakti or devotion represented by Sita here, and Gyan or wisdom represented by sages and hermits, have one thing in common and one common goal—

which is that they lead to attainment of the Supreme Being who represents the ultimate Truth that grants eternal bliss and tranquility to the soul. Realisation of this 'Truth' gives 'Anand', happiness, joy, bliss and a feeling of ecstasy—i.e. attainment of *saccidānanda*.]

चौ०. सानुज सखा समेत मगन मन । बिसरे हरष सोक सुख दुख गन ॥ १ ॥
पाहि नाथ कहि पाहि गोसाईं । भूतल परे लकुट की नाई ॥ २ ॥
बचन सपेम लखन पहिचाने । करत प्रनामु भरत जियँ जाने ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

sānuja sakhā samēta magana mana. bisarē haraṣa sōka sukha dukha gana. 1.
pāhi nātha kahi pāhi gōsā'īm. bhūtala parē lakuṭa kī nā'īm. 2.
bacana sapēma lakhana pahicānē. karata pranāmu bharata jiyam' jānē. 3.

Bharat as well as his brother (Shatrughan) and friend (Guha Nishad) felt so exhilarated in their hearts and minds that they forgot all their earlier joys and sorrows, all their previous pleasures and pains that had dogged them for so long, and had been upsetting and emotionally draining them all along. (1)

Bharat exclaimed 'Oh Lord save me, save me, for I submit myself before thee unconditionally!' even as he fell down on the ground before Lord Ram like a stick (i.e. Bharat prostrated himself before Lord Ram to offer his obeisance to him). (2)

Hearing these affectionate words of Bharat and seeing him prostrating on the ground, Laxman immediately realised that his brother was offering his obeisance (to Lord Ram). (3)

बंधु सनेह सरस एहि ओरा । उत साहिब सेवा बस जोरा ॥ ४ ॥
मिलि न जाइ नहिं गुदरत बनई । सुकबि लखन मन की गति भनई ॥ ५ ॥
रहे राखि सेवा पर भारू । चढ़ी चंग जनु खैंच खेलारू ॥ ६ ॥

bandhu sanēha sarasa ēhi ōrā. uta sāhiba sēvā basa jōrā. 4.
mili na jā'i nahim' gudarata bana'ī. sukabi lakhana mana kī gati bhana'ī. 5.
rahē rākhi sēvā para bhārū. caṛhī caṅga janu khain'ca khēlārū. 6.

Laxman was in a dilemma, not knowing how to react. On the one hand there was a surge of affection in his heart for his brother Bharat (for Laxman wanted to rush forward and immediately embrace Bharat), but he hesitated because on the other hand he was standing on duty, and thus was bound by the norms of protocol and etiquette not to act emotionally and without the consent of his Lord (i.e. Lord Ram). (4)

Laxman's mental state of confusion and uncertainty, and the profound dilemma that he faced regarding what he ought to do, is hinted at by learned bards and those in the know when they say that: "Laxman was neither able to dash forward to meet Bharat

and embrace him, nor was he able to restrain himself from doing it, such was the piquant situation in which he discovered himself.” (5)

But finally, he decided to follow the rules of duty (which forbade him from showing emotional outbursts and acting without Lord Ram’s consent), and hence kept on standing still even as emotionally he was on the edge.

His tense condition was like that of a kite which is held taut against the force of the wind by the string, which restrains the kite from flying off with the flow of the wind¹. (6)

[Note—¹The kite would like to fly-off with the gust of the wind, but the string pulls it back and restrains its natural urge. Similarly, Laxman wanted to make a dash and meet Bharat affectionately, but the call of duty and his strict allegiance to Lord Ram acted as a break on him. At one instant he was about to rush forward towards Bharat, but just at the nick of time he pulled himself back and stood still in his assigned position as a lookout appointed by Lord Ram.]

कहत सप्रेम नाइ महि माथा । भरत प्रनाम करत रघुनाथा ॥ ७ ॥

उठे रामु सुनि पेम अधीरा । कहूँ पट कहूँ निषंग धनु तीरा ॥ ८ ॥

kahata saprēma nā'i mahi māthā. bharata pranāma karata raghunāthā. 7.
uṭhē rāmu suni pēma adhīrā. kahum̐ paṭa kahum̐ niṣaṅga dhanu tīrā. 8.

Fulfilling his duty to tell Lord Ram about the developments, Laxman immediately turned towards the Lord and informed him: ‘Oh Lord Ram, the Lord of the Raghus (raghunāthā), Bharat is bowing before thee to offer his obeisance.’ (7)

No sooner Lord Ram heard these most welcome words spoken by Laxman, but he became overwhelmed with affection for Bharat even as he got up immediately to receive him. The Lord had become so emotional and was in such a great haste to meet Bharat that his robes fell on one side, and his quiver, bow and arrow on the other side. (8)

दो०. बरबस लिए उठाइ उर लाए कृपानिधान ।

भरत राम की मिलनि लखि बिसरे सबहि अपान ॥ २४० ॥

dōhā.

barabasa li'ē uṭhā'i ura lā'ē kṛpānidhāna.
bharata rāma kī milani lakhi bisarē sabahi apāna. 240.

Lord Ram, who is like an ocean of compassion, mercy and grace, forcefully lifted Bharat from the ground (where he lay prostrated), and then embraced him warmly and most affectionately by clasping him to his bosom.

Observing the soulful meeting of Bharat and Lord Ram, everyone who watched them, and witnessed this union of two loving souls, were enthralled and mesmerized by this wonderful sight; everyone became overwhelmed with emotions

themselves so much so that they lost awareness of who they were, as well as of their surroundings. (Doha no. 240)

[Note—Who were the ones that witnessed Lord Ram's meeting with Bharat? Well, the answer is simple: Laxman and Sita, as well as the sages and hermits who had gathered at Lord Ram's hermitage, and the gods in the heaven. All of them were exhilarated; all felt ecstatic; all were awe-struck and stood still as if enchanted by a magical spell.

It was like the case of a 'Jiva' (creature; living being) meeting the Supreme Being; it was like the Atma (individual soul of a creature) realizing its dream of attaining the Parmatma (the supreme Atma, the cosmic Soul). The warmth and love with which Lord Ram received and embraced Bharat were infective; no one who witnessed this meeting was left unmoved and untouched. It was one rare moment that sent thrill through the entire being of all those who were witness to it.]

चौ०. मिलनि प्रीति किमि जाइ बखानी । कबिकुल अगम करम मन बानी ॥ १ ॥
परम पेम पूरन दोउ भाई । मन बुधि चित अहमिति बिसराई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

milani prīti kimi jā'i bakhānī. kabikula agama karama mana bānī. 1.
parama pēma pūrana dō'u bhā'ī. mana budhi cita ahamiti bisarā'ī. 2.

How can anyone describe or narrate the glory and ecstasy of that moment when Lord Ram and Bharat met each other most lovingly and affectionately, as it was so profound, so deep and so intense that it is beyond the reach and competence of even the wisest of bards and the most skilled of poets to sufficiently deal with it even if they tried all their expertise using their mental and physical prowess, as well as their skill with the use of words and their right expression to do so¹. (1)

The two brothers were filled to the brim with the nectar of love and affection for each other, and for the moment they had forgotten all about their personal egos, views and ideas vis-à-vis the developments that had physically separated them, for their mind, intellect, subconscious and heart had been swamped by the huge wave of emotions that overflowed their banks and had swept them off their feet, making the two brothers lose their individualities and become one and inseparable in this re-union. They were transported to a higher, sublime and transcendental state of existence where the 'consciousness' loses awareness of the physical world, and is aware of nothing but bliss, joy and beatitude. (2)

[Note—¹Refer also to verse nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 241 herein below.]

कहहु सुपेम प्रगट को करई । केहि छाया कबि मति अनुसरई ॥ ३ ॥
कबिहि अरथ आखर बलु साँचा । अनुहरि ताल गतिहि नटु नाचा ॥ ४ ॥

kahahu supēma pragaṭa kō kara'ī. kēhi chāyā kabi mati anusara'ī. 3.
kabihi aratha ākhara balu sām̐cā. anuhari tāla gatihi naṭu nācā. 4.

Say, who and how would anyone be able to reveal the glory and the immensity of love and affection that sprouted during those ecstatic moments when Lord Ram met Bharat.

Say, what example a bard or a poet can cite to do justice to that meeting, for all attempts would be like a dark shadow of the real thing. (3)

A bard and a poet rely on the use of language and its words to narrate and describe anything, but such attempts rob the spirit and the essence of the actual happening.

A dancer and a theatre artist knows only how to make his moves in accordance with the training he has got to move with the rhythm of the music that is being played, and not more, because he does not know the actual emotions and sentiments that are behind the episodes on which the musical play is based, and which he is supposed to display by his acting.

[Hence, though the dancer or the artist makes well coordinated and choreographed moves, yet their actions and moves are mechanical in nature; they lack the depth of emotions and sentiments that prevailed at the time of the actual happening of the incident upon which the particular musical play is based, and which the dancer or the artist is expected to display.]¹ (4)

[Note—¹Tulsidas uses this instance to emphasize that it is not at all possible for any third person to correctly and precisely describe the sort of love and affection that existed between Lord Ram and Bharat during those moments when they met each other. It was a private and a personal experience between the two brothers, and no third person can fully understand and measure it.

The dancer or the theatre artist would make correct physical moves while enacting some play or drama on stage, but they cannot display the original emotions and sentiments of those who were directly involved in the ancient episode on which that musical play is based.]

अगम सनेह भरत रघुबर को । जहँ न जाइ मनु बिधि हरि हर को ॥ ५ ॥
सो मैं कुमति कहाँ केहि भाँती । बाज सुराग कि गाँडर ताँती ॥ ६ ॥

agama sanēha bharata raghubara kō. jaham̐ na jā'i manu bidhi hari hara kō.
5.

sō mair̐ kumati kahaur̐ kēhi bhām̐tī. bāja surāga ki gām̐ḍara tām̐tī. 6.

The purity of emotion of love and affection that existed between Bharat and Lord Ram was so profound, so deep and so stupendous that it is not possible to measure it, to fathom it or to understand it, for it defies comprehension and imagination.

In fact, even the mind of the great Trinity Gods, i.e. Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer and protector, and Shiva the concluder of this creation, who are supposed to be all-knowing and most erudite, fail to comprehend and measure the intensity and depth of the mutual love and affection that existed between the two brothers¹. (5)

This being the case, says the poet Tulsidas, how can I, who is dull-witted and a person of very limited intellect and understanding, ever, and in any way, measure and comprehend their love and affection for each other sufficiently enough so as to enable me to do justice to this glorious virtue by describing and narrating it properly.

Say, can a stringed musical instrument that has its strings made from a cord using soft twigs ever produce good music like the one that has strings made in the traditional way by using dried intestines and skins of sheep (gāmṣḍara tāmṣṭī)²? (6)

[Note—¹We have read earlier that the revered deity of Prayag*1 and the exalted sage Bharadwaj*2 were unequivocal in their praise of Bharat and the purity of his devotion as well as love for Lord Ram. This present verse is merely an extension of that praise.

{*1Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 205.

*2Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 208—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 210.}

²In this metaphor, Tulsidas compares himself to a stringed musical instrument whose strings are made from soft twigs. How can one expect such an instrument to produce good music? Good tunes and notes are produced if the string is made from dried intestines of sheep and other animals (gāmṣḍara tāmṣṭī), and when the cover of the drum to which these strings are attached is made from dried skin of the same animal.

So, the saint-poet says that he is completely incompetent to describe in any reasonable way the depth and intensity of love and affection that existed between Lord Ram and Bharat just like case of one expecting to hear good music from a stringed musical instrument that has cords made from twigs instead of from dried intestines of sheep or other animals, for only the latter type of the musical instrument would produce excellent notes and tunes.

Another classical example is the ‘bow’ whose string is made from dried intestines of selected animals. The bow’s string must be tough and strong; it must have enough of tensile strength to bear the stretch and pull exerted on it to shoot an arrow from the bow. How can a bow having a string made from, say, cotton thread, ever be used by a warrior in warfare, or by anyone who actually needs to shoot an arrow to kill? A bow with a cotton thread is only for show, and has nothing but ornamental value.]

मिलनि बिलोकि भरत रघुबर की । सुरगन सभय धकधकी धरकी ॥ ७ ॥

समुझाए सुरगुरु जड़ जागे । बरषि प्रसून प्रसंसन लागे ॥ ८ ॥

milani bilōki bharata raghubara kī. suragana sabhaya dhakadhakī dharakī. 7.
samujhā'ē suraguru jara jāgē. baraṣi prasūna prasansana lāgē. 8.

Meanwhile, when the gods saw this affectionate meeting of the two loving brothers, they became fidgety and alarmed; their hearts beat faster even as fear of their hopes being dashed overcame their more rational thoughts¹. (7)

Their guru (sage Brihaspati) once again enlightened them and advised them not to worry and fear Bharat.

This dispelled the gods' fears, and waking up from (or overcoming) their disillusionment they began showering flowers cheerfully (upon Bharat and Lord Ram)². (8)

[Note—¹What was the fear of the gods; what was causing them so much heartburn and putting them on tenterhooks? Well, they feared that being compassionate and merciful, Lord Ram would bend to the wishes of Bharat and agree to return home. In case that happened, the entire plan of getting the demons eliminated would go down the drain.

But this fear of the gods was unfounded and unwarranted, for they had been warned earlier by their guru, sage Brihaspati, not to meddle with Bharat and try dirty tricks to stop his meeting with Lord Ram. He had advised the gods not to fear Bharat as he was a very saintly and pious soul, and being a great devotee of Lord Ram he would not do anything against the Lord's wish. Further, Lord Ram was well aware of his responsibilities towards the god*1.

This obviously meant that if Lord Ram wanted to go to the forest to fulfill his mandate to eliminate the demons, as issue that has caused so much worry to the gods, then they ought to rest in peace because Bharat was surely not going to cause any obstacles in the path of Lord Ram. So therefore, there was no reason for the gods to fear Bharat. The gods' guru has even gone to the extent of calling them 'selfish' for they think of only their own interests*2.

{*1Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 220.

*2Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 217—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 220; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 266.}

But inspite of this, we read here that the gods were on edge. This shows how selfishness deprives one of all rational thinking, how a selfishness-driven person throws all caution to the wind and loses all sense of prudence, probity and propriety in order to guard his interests, often at great cost to himself. The gods are worshipped by the world, they are supposed to be noble and righteous, and helpful to people in distress. But their selfishness gave them a tainted character, for now onwards the world would know that it can't rely on these gods for they might try dirty tricks on it if their interests are not served. So therefore, in the future the world would shun them and would rather prefer to seek refuge in the feet of Lord Ram, because the Lord is very merciful and is sure to help the people of the world even if it meant defying their fate, for the Lord always keeps the wishes and interests and happiness of his devotees supreme; for the Lord, his devotee is supreme. This latter observation is not imaginary, but endorsed by verses of Ram Charit Manas itself—apropos: (a) Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 219; (ii) Doha no. 264; (b) Uttar Kand, (iii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 86; (iv) Chaupai line no. 16 that precedes Doha no. 120.

²A similar situation had occurred earlier too—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 219—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 220.]

दो०. मिलि सपेम रिपुसूदनहि केवटु भेंटैउ राम ।

भूरि भायँ भेंटे भरत लछिमन करत प्रनाम ॥ २४१ ॥

dōhā.

mili sapēma ripusūdanahi kēvaṭu bhēṇṭē'u rāma.
bhūri bhāyam̐ bhēṇṭē bharata lachimana karata pranāma. 241.

Then, Lord Ram affectionately met Shatrughan (ripusūdana), after which he met Kewat (i.e. Guha Nishad).

In the meantime, as soon as Bharat saw Laxman reverentially bowing before him, he rushed forward and affectionately clasped the latter to his bosom. (Doha no. 249)

[Note—So we see that first Lord Ram meets Bharat; this is followed by the Lord meeting Shatrughan and Nishad respectively, and finally Bharat meets Laxman who was bowing before him to pay his respects.

The affectionate meeting of the four brothers and Nishad has also been narrated in Veda Vyas' "Adhyatma Ramayan", Ayodhya Kand, Canto 9, verse nos. 1-7.]

चौ०. भेंटेउ लखन ललकि लघु भाई । बहुरि निषादु लीन्ह उर लाई ॥ १ ॥

पुनि मुनिगन दुहुँ भाइन्ह बंदे । अभिमत आसिष पाइ अनंदे ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

bhēṇṭē'u lakhana lalaki laghu bhā'ī. bahuri niṣādu līnha ura lā'ī. 1.
puni munigana duhum̐ bhā'inha bandē. abhimata āsiṣa pā'i anandē. 2.

Likewise, Laxman eagerly, and with the greatest of affection, met his younger brother (Shatrughan), after which he embraced Nishad lovingly¹. (1)

Thereafter, the two brothers (i.e. Bharat and Shatrughan) bowed their heads reverentially before the sages and hermits who were present in Lord Ram's hermitage at that time², and the two brothers felt very exhilarated when the sages and hermits reciprocated their gesture by blessing them profusely. (2)

[Note—¹We must mark here that a personal bond marked by abiding friendship, unmatched affection and great respect mutual respect for each other was created between Nishad and all the four brothers. This relationship was unique, and not replicated or mirrored by anyone else in the whole story.

First, Lord Ram has unequivocally declared his friendship with Nishad*1, and Laxman too had become very friendly with him so much so that he has addressed Nishad with the words 'friend' and 'brother', affectionate terms used for someone who is very close and dear*2; Nishad was the only person who was allowed by the Lord to accompany him quite a long way on his journey to the forest, for Nishad had accompanied the Lord past sage Bharadwaj's hermitage till the banks of river Yamuna from where the Lord asked him to return home*3.

{*1Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precedes Doha no. 88; (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 196.

*2Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 92 (brother); and (ii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 93; Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 94 (friend—"Sakha").

*3Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 3-7 that precede Doha no. 104; and (ii) Doha no. 111.}

Then we read that Nishad had escorted the chief minister, Sumantra, to the outskirts of Ayodhya, till the banks of river Tamsa, when he found that the former was so distressed and depressed that he had parked his chariot on the side of the road and sat there like a man who has lost everything in this world. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 142—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 147.}

Now, when Bharat was on his way to meet Lord Ram, once again Guha Nishad lived upto his reputation and kept his vows of friendship with the family by accompanying and guiding Bharat and his party from his village in Sringeripur right upto Chitrakoot. Bharat too has called Nishad his 'friend', has shown him great love as if Nishad represented Laxman himself, and like two close and dear friends, they had often walked hand-in-hand, with Bharat seeking Nishad's support to help him overcome his sadness. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 193—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 194; (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 198; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precedes Doha no. 203 (Nishad leads the party from the front, acting as a guide); (iv) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 221 (Nishad walks alongside Bharat and Shatrughan); (v) Doha no. 237 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it (Nishad was the first one to spot Lord Ram's hermitage); (v) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 238, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 239, and Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 240 (where Nishad is repeatedly called Bharat's friend).}

²Refer: Doha nos. 237 and 239 herein above.]

सानुज भरत उमगि अनुरागा । धरि सिर सिय पद पदुम परागा ॥ ३ ॥

पुनि पुनि करत प्रनाम उठाए । सिर कर कमल परसि बैठाए ॥ ४ ॥

sānuja bharata umagi anurāgā. dhari sira siya pada paduma parāgā. 3.
puni puni karata pranāma uṭhā'ē. sira kara kamala parasi baiṭhā'ē. 4.

Overcome with excess of affection and respect, Bharat and his younger brother (Shatrughan) fell down before Sita and put the dust of her lotus-like feet on their heads (dhari sira siya pada) as if they were picking up drops of nectar that drips naturally from a lotus flower (paduma parāgā)*.

[*This verse can be read in another way too as follows: "Overcome with excess of affection and respect, Bharat and his younger brother (Shatrughan) fell down before Sita and put their heads on the dust of her lotus-like feet (dhari sira siya pada), treating it as if it was nectar that had dripped out of a lotus flower (paduma parāgā)."] (3)

Seeing them repeatedly bowing before her, Sita lifted them and made them sit down before her even as she placed her lotus-like hands (*kara kamala parasi baiṭhā'ē*) on their heads (*sira*) (to affectionately caress and bless them)¹. (4)

[Note—¹It ought to be noted here that Sita was treated most reverentially by all the three brothers, Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan, and in turn she treated them like her own sons.

At the time of going to the forest, when Laxman had gone to take permission from his mother Sumitra, she has expressly advised him to 'treat Lord Ram as his father, and Sita as his mother in the forest', and 'serve them with this attitude'—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 74; (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 and Chanda line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 75.]

सीयँ असीस दीन्हि मन माहीं । मगन सनेहँ देह सुधि नाहीं ॥ ५ ॥
सब बिधि सानुकूल लखि सीता । भे निसोच उर अपडर बीता ॥ ६ ॥

sīyam' asisa dīnhi mana māhīm. magana sanēham' dēha sudhi nāhīm. 5.
saba bidhi sānukūla lakhi sītā. bhē nisōca ura apaḍara bītā. 6.

Sita silently blessed them (Bharat and Shatrughan) from the depth of her heart; she was so overwhelmed with affection for them that she lost awareness of her own self¹. (5)

When they (Bharat and Shatrughan) discovered that Sita was favourably inclined towards them (and she harboured no ill-will, suspicion or anger), they were greatly pleased; all their hesitations, consternations and fears were dispelled². (6)

[Note—¹Like a loving mother who never takes to heart any mischief done by her sons, Sita's love for the two brothers overflowed from her heart even as she quietly blessed them from its depth. Besides this, Sita had heard what Lord Ram had said to Laxman regarding Bharat just a while ago*1. Hence, all doubts vis-à-vis Bharat and his intentions and characters were dispelled. Even the gods had endorsed Lord Ram's praise for Bharat, and this praise was heard by Sita too*2.

{*1Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 231—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 232.

*2Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 232 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that follow it.}

²To wit, when the two brothers found that Sita had no suspicion regarding them, that her motherly love for them was the same now as it had been earlier, they felt very happy and reassured. The reason is that though they were quite sure of Lord Ram's attitude towards them, they had some secret doubts regarding how Sita felt for them. And their doubts were not completely unfounded too, for we have already read that even their own brother Laxman was up in arms against Bharat when the news arrived of his arrival at Chitrakoot. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 227—to Doha no. 230.}

Hence, if Laxman could have doubts about Bharat's intentions and integrity, Sita too could have it, for after all she came from a different family and background, and her relationships with Bharat and Shatrughan were because she had married their elder brother, Lord Ram. On the other hand, Laxman had a direct blood-relationship with them, being their own brother, and so if Laxman failed to correctly judge Bharat's character, it is no wonder that Sita too could have doubted Bharat.]

कोउ किछु कहइ न कोउ किछु पूँछा । प्रेम भरा मन निज गति छूँछा ॥ ७ ॥
तेहि अवसर केवटु धीरजु धरि । जोरि पानि बिनवत प्रनामु करि ॥ ८ ॥

kō'u kichu kaha'i na kōu kichu pūm'chā. prēma bharā mana nija gati chūm'chā.
7.
tēhi avasara kēvaṭu dhīraju dhari. jōri pāni binavata pranāmu kari. 8.

It was a unique moment when everyone stood silently and no one uttered a word; neither did anyone say anything nor did anyone ask anything. Emotions of love and affection swelled in everyone's heart and swept all those present on the occasion off their feet so much so that their minds became hollow and stopped thinking. (7)

On this occasion however, Kewat (Guha Nishad) got his wits together and gathered courage to break the silence. He joined the palms of his hands and bowed his head as he spoke politely. (8)

दो०. नाथ साथ मुनिनाथ के मातु सकल पुर लोग ।
सेवक सेनप सचिव सब आए बिकल बियोग ॥ २४२ ॥
dōhā.

nātha sātha muninātha kē mātu sakala pura lōga.
sēvaka sēnapa saciva saba ā'ē bikala biyōga. 242.

Guha Nishad said to Lord Ram: 'Oh Lord, the queen mothers and the citizens, as well as the servants, ministers and members of the army have accompanied the guru (sage Vasistha). They are all stricken with grief of separation from you, and all have come here.¹' (Doha no. 242)

[Note—¹Earlier, Lord Ram had observed that a huge cloud of dust had risen in the northern sky, alarmed birds and animals were running towards his hermitage from all directions, and soon the Kols and Kirats came to inform the Lord that a large number of people were coming in the direction of the Lord's hermitage—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 226.

Besides this, Sita had seen a dream in which she saw Bharat coming with a large entourage of citizens, and that everyone had a sad face and looked distraught from grief of separation from Lord Ram—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 226.

Hence, Lord Ram was already in the know that Bharat was not alone, and that he was accompanied by a huge entourage consisting of citizens of Ayodhya.

Presently, the stunning silence that prevailed at the moment when Bharat entered Lord Ram's hermitage and all the brothers met each other, was so overbearing that for some moments everyone stood dazed and immobilized, undecided what to say and how to react. This ice of silence and its attendant numbness was broken by Nishad who intervened and politely informed Lord Ram that a large number of people had come with Bharat, including the mothers, citizens, servants, ministers, army men and guru Vasistha, and that they were all waiting at a distance.]

चौ०. सीलसिंधु सुनि गुर आगवनू । सिय समीप राखे रिपुदवनू ॥ १ ॥

चले सबेग रामु तेहि काला । धीर धरम धुर दीनदयाला ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sīlasindhu suni gura āgavanū. siya samīpa rākhē ripudavanū. 1.

calē sabēga rāmu tēhi kālā. dhīra dharama dhura dīnadayālā. 2.

No sooner did Lord Ram, who was an ocean of the virtues of goodness, politeness, courteousness, amiability and etiquette (sīlasindhu), hear of the arrival of his guru (sage Vasistha), he left Shatrughan (ripudavanū) by the side of Sita¹, --- (1)

--- And the Lord, who was an epitome of patience (dhīra), an upholder of the principles of Dharma (righteousness, probity, propriety, ethics, nobility in thoughts and conduct—"dharama dhura") as well as merciful towards those who are distressed and humble (dīnadayālā), himself proceeded in all haste to receive the guru. (2)

[Note—¹Lord Ram left Shatrughan to be by the side of Sita while he hurriedly went to receive all those who had come with Bharat and were waiting at some distance from his hermitage. He took Laxman and Bharat along with him, so therefore the only one of the three brothers left to stay with Sita was Shatrughan.

Lord Ram purposely left Shatrughan to attend Sita while he was gone to welcome the guests and bring all of them to his hermitage. One obvious reason was to guard Sita and keep company with her during the brief time the Lord was away. But there is another subtle and not-too-obvious reason for doing so: the Lord wanted to give Shatrughan an opportunity in private to explain things threadbare to Sita, to convince her that Bharat had no role to play in what his mother Kaikeyi had done, and thereby remove any misgivings that she might still have had vis-à-vis Bharat's role in the entire unfortunate episode that culminated in her as well as Lord Ram's and Laxman's coming to the forest. It was absolutely necessary to do it now while Sita was alone and there was ample time for Shatrughan to explain things to her in detail in a private audience, because once the whole entourage entered the hermitage, there would be a large crowd and a lot of hustle and bustle so that such an opportunity to explain things and remove misunderstandings in a private setting would be lost forever.

Shatrughan was the right person to discuss the matter in detail with Sita for the simple reason that he always stayed with Bharat, and was the latter's close and constant companion and confidante. He was the proper person who could convince Sita that Bharat was completely innocent by telling her how Bharat had strongly condemned and sternly rebuked Kaikeyi once he learnt of her evil deeds after

returning home from abroad*1, how he (Shatrughan) had himself dragged Manthara by her hairs all along the courtyard of the palace, kicking and punching her*2, how Bharat had bluntly turned down the offer of the crown in spite of everyone trying to persuade him to accept it*3, with him saying that his best interests lay in serving Lord Ram and asking for forgiveness from him*4, and finally how even the deity of Paryag*5 as well as the exalted sage Bharadwaj had lavishly praised Bharat's love and devotion for Lord Ram*6—there is no reason that after hearing the details from Shatrughan, Sita's heart would brim over with love for Bharat, that she would forgive him sincerely, and that any trace of secret misgiving that might have lingered on in her heart till now would certainly be wiped away once and for all.

{*1Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 161—to Doha no. 162.

*2Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 163.

*3Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 174—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 182.

*4Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 182—to Doha no. 183.

*5Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 205.

*6Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 207—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 210.}]

गुरहि देखि सानुज अनुरागे । दंड प्रनाम करन प्रभु लागे ॥ ३ ॥
मुनिबर धाइ लिए उर लाई । प्रेम उमगि भेंटे दोउ भाई ॥ ४ ॥

gurahi dēkhi sānuja anurāgē. daṇḍa pranāma karana prabhu lāgē. 3.
munibara dhā'i li'ē ura lā'ī. prēma umagi bhēṇṭē dō'u bhā'ī. 4.

When Lord Ram saw his guru (sage Vasistha), he and his younger brother (Laxman) were overwhelmed with affection and reverence for the sage, and the Lord immediately began prostrating before him. (3)

The exalted sage ("munibara"; Vasistha) rushed forward, lifted Lord Ram, and affectionately embraced him.

Love surged in the heart of the sage as he met the two brothers (Lord Ram and Laxman) very endearingly. (4)

प्रेम पुलकि केवट कहि नामू । कीन्ह दूरि तें दंड प्रनामू ॥ ५ ॥
रामसखा रिषि बरबस भेंटा । जनु महि लुठत सनेह समेटा ॥ ६ ॥

prēma pulaki kēvaṭa kahi nāmū. kīnha dūri tēṁ daṇḍa pranāmū. 5.
rāmasakhā riṣi barabasa bhēṇṭā. janu mahi luṭhata sanēha samēṭā. 6.

Kewat (Guha Nishad) was thrilled all over when he saw the sage lovingly embracing Lord Ram and Laxman so much so that he announced his name from a respectable distance and fell on the ground to prostrate himself before the sage¹. (5)

The sage reciprocated the gestures of Lord Ram's friend ("rāmasakhā"; Guha Nishad) by forcibly lifting and embracing him (inspite of Nishad's shyness and reluctance at being shown such honours) as if he (i.e. the sage) was eagerly collecting a treasure symbolized by Nishad's love and affection that lay spread on the ground before him². (6)

[Note—¹Nishad was of a low and humble birth, being a tribal and a boatman by profession. As such, he was very reluctant and felt shy to go near sage Vasistha who was a Brahmin, a great and respected sage, the chief priest of the kingdom of Ayodhya, and the guru (preceptor, teacher, advisor and spiritual guide) of Lord Ram and the royal family. Earlier too Nishad had bowed before the sage from a safe and respectable distance in accordance to prevalent norms and protocols, but at that time too the sage had affectionately met him because Nishad was a friend of Lord Ram—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 193.

²Nishad kept lying on the ground as he felt very shy when the great sage approached to embrace him. This is because Nishad knew that he was a tribal and of a low birth, and hence it would be highly improper for him to stand before the exalted sage and face him as if he was of a noble origin. Hence, when sage Vasistha found that Nishad was very reluctant to get up, he bent down to forcibly lift and embrace the latter.

The point to note here is that Guha Nishad has been shown so much respect and honour by everyone by the virtue of his being a 'friend of Lord Ram', inspite of his low birth, humble background, tribal origin, and a very mundane and ordinary life; he was definitely not educated, nor was cultured and well-heeled like a city-dweller generally is.

To wit, the only claim Nishad had to glory was his being a friend of Lord Ram, someone whom the Lord had shown great affection by embracing him and showing great preference*1. When Lord Ram returned to Ayodhya at the end of fourteen years in the forest, Nishad had accompanied him to the city where the Lord had treated him as his special guest. After sometime, when Nishad was sent home by the Lord, he was given gifts and promised abiding friendship by the Lord who asked him to keep coming back to visit him whenever he wishes to do so*2.

{*1Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-12 and Chanda line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 121.

*2Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 20.}

The idea is that by being a devotee of Lord Ram, even a very humble creature is lifted to occupy a high and esteemed place in the society; the lowest becomes the highest. Such a person is revered and showed honour by those who are much higher than that person in the social hierarchy, as was the case of with sage Vasistha and Bharat showing great affection and respect for Guha Nishad by the virtue of his being a friend of Lord Ram.]

रघुपति भगति सुमंगल मूला । नभ सराहि सुर बरिसहिं फूला ॥ ७ ॥

एहि सम निपट नीच कोउ नाही । बड़ बसिष्ठ सम को जग माहीं ॥ ८ ॥

raghupati bhagati sumāṅgala mūlā. nabha sarāhi sura barisahim phūlā. 7.
ēhi sama nipaṭa nīca kō'u nāhīm. barā basiṣṭha sama kō jaga māhīm. 8.

Appreciating the importance of the virtue of devotion for Lord Ram, a virtue that is the root of all auspiciousness (as it has turned even a tribal and low-born Nishad an object of great respect and honour by someone as exalted as sage Vasistha)¹, the gods were exhilarant, and to show their joy they showered flowers from the heavens even as they praised the virtue of devotion as well as its practitioner, Guha Nishad. (7)

The gods said unanimously: ‘Truly indeed, there is no one as humble and lowly as him (Guha Nishad), while there is no one else who is as exalted and honourable as sage Vasistha. (8)

[Note—¹A similar idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chanda line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 121.]

दो०. जेहि लखि लखनहु तें अधिक मिले मुदित मुनिराउ ।
सो सीतापति भजन को प्रगट प्रताप प्रभाउ ॥ २४३ ॥

dōhā.

jēhi lakhi lakhanahu tēm adhika milē mudita munirā'u.
sō sītāpati bhajana kō pragaṭa pratāpa prabhā'u. 243.

Inspite of this wide difference in their stature and standing in the society, when the exalted sage saw him (Nishad) he embraced him with greater joy than was shown by him for Laxman.

Verily indeed, in all sooth and without gainsay, it is a very obvious and remarkable result of remembering, adoring, worshipping and having devotion¹ for Lord Ram, the Lord of Sita (sītāpati)² (Doha no. 243)

[Note—¹The word used in the verse is “bhajana”, and in English its true spirit is expressed not by a single word that can be regarded as its equivalent, but by a combination of words such as devotion, worship, adoration and remembrance that would actually convey the meaning of this word in its entirety. It is to be noted here that this is a universal problem when translating or converting one word or phrase or a sentence from a particular language belonging to a particular culture and region into another language that is foreign to it, and pertains to a different culture and region, because in such cases an exact equivalent of a given word in a different language of a different culture is more often than not impossible to find. Hence, in such cases it is wiser to employ a group of words or phrases so that the true spirit and the wider meaning of the original word, and its use in the context of the text, are retained, and not compromised or distorted.

²A quite similar incidence took place on the banks of river Ganges at Sringeripur when sage Vasistha and Bharat met Guha Nishad for the first time. There too Nishad

has been highly praised by the gods and others who were present on the occasion. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 193—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 195.}

Further, the importance of devotion and worshipping Lord Ram has been stressed by the saintly crow Kaagbhusund in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Doha no. 78 along with Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 84; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 86; (iv) Chaupai line nos. 2 and 8 that precede Doha no. 90; (v) Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 96; (vi) Doha no. 194.

At one point Lord Ram tells Kaagbhusund that the only quality in a creature that the Lord recognizes and appreciates is the virtue of devotion. If this virtue is lacking even in the mighty gods, they are of no importance for the Lord. On the other hand, if this virtue is present in the lowliest of creatures, the latter is very dear to the Lord. This is expressly stated in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 86.

This rule fits in well with Nishad, and hence he was honoured and praised by one and all.]

चौ०. आरत लोग राम सबु जाना । करुनाकर सुजान भगवाना ॥ १ ॥
जो जेहि भायँ रहा अभिलाषी । तेहि तेहि कै तसि तसि रुख राखी ॥ २ ॥
सानुज मिलि पल महुँ सब काहू । कीन्ह दूरि दुखु दारुन दाहू ॥ ३ ॥
यह बड़ि बात राम कै नाहीं । जिमि घट कोटि एक रबि छाहीं ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

ārata lōga rāma sabu jānā. karunākara sujāna bhagavānā. 1.
jō jēhi bhāyam̐ rahā abhilāṣī. tēhi tēhi kai tasi tasi rukha rākhī. 2.
sānuja mili pala mahum̐ saba kāhū. kīnha dūri dukhu dārūna dāhū. 3.
yaha baḍi bāta rāma kai nāhīm̐. jimi ghaṭa kōṭi ēka rabi chāhīm̐. 4.

Lord Ram, who is very merciful and compassionate by nature, as well as highly obliging and gracious, perceived that everyone was restless and very eager to meet him personally. (1)

Hence, the Lord obliged all of them by reciprocating their individual likings and wishes, for the Lord fulfilled the wishes of everyone and satisfied them all¹. (2)

In a miraculous and mysterious way truly, Lord Ram and his younger brother (Laxman) met everyone individually within the span of a few moments, thereby removing their sorrows and the grief of separation from which they were all suffering intensely². (3)

Indeed, this apparent miracle was not impossible for Lord Ram to perform, and neither was it something unusual nor mysterious because the same sun would simultaneously be seen as a reflection in a number of pots filled with water, with each pot appearing to reflect an independent image of the sun, giving the impression that there are as many suns in the sky as there are water-filled pots on the ground³. (4)

[Note—¹Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 241—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 242.]

The context here is the bow-breaking ceremony organized by king Janak. A huge gathering of competitors as well as spectators had assembled at the venue. When Lord Ram and Laxman walked in with sage Vishwamitra, the Lord's charming image mesmerized the crowd. Each individual had his or her own opinion about Lord Ram, and so a miracle unfolded at that time too, because the Lord appeared to each individual in accordance to that person's liking and imagination. Everyone saw Lord Ram in the way he or she wished to see him: some observed the cosmic form of the Lord as a Viraat Purush, someone viewed him as a prince, others as a friend, some viewed the Lord as a dear son, and someone else saw the Lord as a hermit present there to reward the individual's spiritual efforts, while competitors present there saw in him their enemy.

The same situation prevailed in Chitrakoot. Some saw and met him as their childhood friend, some as their beloved prince, some as if he was their family member, and so on and so forth.

²A similar situation happened when Lord returned to Ayodhya from Lanka at the end of his fourteen years of forest exile. The whole city came out and every citizen wanted to meet and welcome the Lord personally. At that time too, Lord Ram performed a miracle of sorts by meeting each single person individually within a very short time. Everyone believed that Lord Ram has met him first, but the Lord met all the citizens simultaneously. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 6.}

To explain this phenomenon, the example of the image of the same sun being seen as a reflection in the water of many pots is cited here. An ignorant person who is not aware of the fact, that there is only one sun high up in the sky and what he sees in the water is only its reflection, would be deluded to think that there are many suns, each pot having a sun. The truth, however, is that there is only one sun and it is high up in the sky, and not in the pot; what one sees in the water-filled pots are merely reflections of that single sun.

³This verse draws from the metaphysical philosophy that the same Atma, or the soul representing 'pure consciousness', resides in the body of all living creatures. The primary form of this Atma is known as the 'Parmatma', or the Supreme Atma; it represents the 'cosmic form of Consciousness'. This Parmatma is represented by Lord Ram here, while the individuals whom Lord Ram met represent the living beings or the creatures in whose body that cosmic Atma resides in the form of the individual's own Atma. So therefore, it is like seeing an image of the same sun in the water of the many pots lined up on the ground.

This metaphor is also apt from another viewpoint too. The body of all living beings is gross and perishable, just like the earthen pot. But 'consciousness' is a different and independent entity, for it is eternal and sublime, not gross and perishable like the body. The 'consciousness' represented by the Atma is a universal and all-pervading single entity that gives the gross body of a creature its life; without the Atma the creature is dead. If the 'water' is removed from the earthen pot, no reflection of the 'sun' would be seen inside it. Likewise, if the Atma is removed from the individual's body, there would be no life in it. And since the individual Atma is a microcosmic form of the universal entity known as the macrocosmic Atma, or the 'Supreme Atma', the 'Parmatma', at the higher cosmic level of existence, it follows

that what we see as ‘life’ in all living beings is merely an image of the cosmic Consciousness that is universal and all-pervading.

In the present context of this verse, when it is said here that ‘Lord Ram met all the citizens simultaneously and individually’, it is merely an extension of the above metaphysical philosophy; it is merely another way of expressing what has been said herein above.]

मिलि केवटहि उमगि अनुरागा । पुरजन सकल सराहहि भागा ॥ ५ ॥
देखीं राम दुखित महतारीं । जनु सुबेलि अवलीं हिम मारीं ॥ ६ ॥

mili kēvaṭahi umagi anurāgā. purajana sakala sarāhahim bhāgā. 5.
dēkhīm rāma dukhita mahatārīm. janu subēli avalīm hima mārīm. 6.

After meeting Lord Ram and Laxman, everyone met Kewat (i.e. Guha Nishad) with affection overwhelming their hearts. All the citizens unanimously praised the luck and good fortune of Nishad¹. (5)

Next, Lord Ram saw his mothers who were so distraught and saddened with grief that they resembled creepers that have shrunk after being bitten by frost². (6)

[Note—¹Its seems very odd on the face of it when we read here that the citizens would meet Guha Nishad at Chitrakoot, although he had accompanied Bharat and his entourage right from Sringeripur, Nishad’s home village. So, Nishad was with the procession, often leading it from the front as a guide, so obviously everyone knew him well.

The probable reason for the poet Tulsidas mentioning such meeting between the citizens and Nishad here is that in the current scenario, Nishad stands close to Lord Ram and Laxman, just like a close friend and confidante would stand, and from the gestures exchanged between them it was obvious to others that a special bond existed between Lord Ram and Nishad.

To wit, at present Nishad presents a completely different picture from what the people had thought of him earlier, for no one had an inkling that he was so very close to Lord Ram and his dear friend.

Hence, all of a sudden their view and opinion of Nishad changed; what they had previously thought of him as being merely a tribal volunteering to be a guide of Bharat to enable him to travel through unknown territory in the wild forest, suddenly transmuted into someone significant and of great importance, someone who was very close and dear to Lord Ram. That is why sage Vasistha had himself met and embraced Nishad most affectionately just a while ago—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 243 herein above.

Emulating the sage, the citizens too showed their respect to Nishad by meeting him personally, to exchange greetings and praise his good luck.

²A similar physical condition is described with reference to Kaushalya when Bharat first met her after returning home to Ayodhya from abroad—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 163.]

प्रथम राम भेंटी कैकेई । सरल सुभायँ भगति मति भेई ॥ ७ ॥

पग परि कीन्ह प्रबोधु बहोरी । काल करम बिधि सिर धरि खोरी ॥ ८ ॥

prathama rāma bhēṇṭī kaikēī. sarala subhāyam̐ bhagati mati bhēī. 7.
paga pari kīnha prabōdhu bahōrī. kāla karama bidhi sira dhari khōrī. 8.

Lord Ram met Kaikeyi (Bharat's mother and the one who was responsible for sending Lord Ram to the forest) first (before meeting his own mother Kaushalya, as well as Laxman's mother Sumitra)¹.

The Lord's show of politeness, gentle manners, genteel behaviour and courteousness helped the Lord to let Kaikeyi overcome her embarrassment and guilty conscious so much so that her mind bent towards the virtue of devotion and affection for the Lord². (7)

Lord Ram fell down at her feet and reassured her that he harbours no ill-will against her by telling her that whatever that had happened was none of her fault at all, but it was due to the turning of the wheel of time in a particular direction, driven by the fiat of fate, provisions of providence and the dictate of destiny over which no one has any control, and therefore she is not to be blamed for anything that had happened, and neither should she feel guilty or embarrassed at all about it.

Thus, by casting the blame of the unfortunate developments of the past (which had led to so much turmoil in the kingdom, the death of king Dasrath, and Lord Ram coming to the forest) on the wheel of time, the cruelty of fate and the inviolable dictates of an equally cruel destiny that cannot be changed or deferred, Lord Ram helped to calm down Kaikeyi's agitations and sooth her sense of guilt that had been bearing down heavily on her conscience for a long time. [It also softened Kaikeyi and mellowed her heart so much that she now developed affection and devotion for Lord Ram much like her son Bharat had, as well as her other sister-queens, Kaushalya and Sumitra, had.] (8)

[Note—¹When Lord Ram returned to Ayodhya at the end of the fourteen years of his forest exile, when he entered the royal palace, he first went and met Kaikeyi very affectionately to remove any remnants of embarrassment that she might still be having—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 10.

²Lord Ram's gesture is very significant for many reasons. First, Kaikeyi's son Bharat had proved by his conduct that he loves Lord Ram exceedingly, and so the Lord wished to tell him that he too harbours no ill-will against his mother, and that he has the same respect for her now as he always had for her in the past.

Second, whatever Kaikeyi did had a subtle and silent consent of Lord Ram, who we must always remember was not an ordinary prince but the Supreme Being who had assumed the Lord's human form with a mission to accomplish, which was to eliminate the scourge of the demons. This would not have been possible if the Lord hadn't gone to the forest with Sita, which is proved by the subsequent developments that culminated in the War of Lanka, and the death of Ravana and his horde of ferocious demons.

To wit, the credit of making it happen goes indeed to Kaikeyi, and in a way Lord Ram was very thankful to her for bearing with a lifetime of ignominy so as to

enable the Lord to accomplish his mission successfully, and in the process give us the epic story of the Ramayana.

Third, it underlines the gracious, tolerant, benevolent and forgiving nature of Lord Ram who has no compunctions or reservations in being good, courteous and forgiving towards a person who has caused so much grief and misery to others by some selfish and wicked deed.

Fourth, the Lord wants to give us a message that to move on in life successfully it is better and necessary too to forget about the past and look into the future; it is always good to bury the hatchet and make up with even those who appear to be inimical to us in the past, for no one can say who would be needed for some kind of help in a changed situation in the womb of the future, for it may be that a person who was our antagonist in the past might have regretted for his misdeeds and wishes to make amends if given a chance by going out of his way to help us somewhere down the line in the future when we find ourselves at sea, and even our so-called friends and well-wishers abandon us for it does not suit their own self-interests to support us in the changed situation. The lesson is: History can't be changed, but surely the Future can be taken good care of.

By showing courtesy and respect to Kaikeyi, Lord Ram endeared Bharat to himself more, the Lord won Bharat's heart, for after all she was Bharat's mother, and when a mother is shown respect by someone who has been made to suffer due to her wickedness, but who goes out of his way to prove that he still respects her like Lord Ram had shown for Kaikeyi, it is but natural that it will have a positive influence on her son. Bharat would now be totally committed to be loyal to Lord Ram for he realized that the Lord is a gem that is worth adoring and cherishing; he is a brother the like of whom is nowhere to be found in the whole of the Creator's realm.

Fifth, by showing respect to Kaikeyi, Lord Ram ensured that family goodwill and unity remains undiluted. The Lord's gracious behaviour ensured that at least in the future, Kaikeyi will not try any more dirty tricks against any member of the family, for the embarrassment was too stifling for her to overcome, and so surely she won't make the mistake to subject herself to scorn, castigation, ridicule, contempt and outright rejection in the future by repeating the same mischief that she had done in the past; Lord Ram's courteous behaviour towards her was an insurance against such eventuality in the future.]

दो०. भेटीं रघुबर मातु सब करि प्रबोधु परितोषु ।

अंब ईस आधीन जगु काहु न देइअ दोषु ॥ २४४ ॥

dōhā.

bhēṭīm raghubara mātu saba kari prabōdhu paritōṣu.
amba īsa ādhīna jagu kāhu na dē'i'a dōṣu. 244.

Thereafter, Lord Ram met all other mothers (i.e. his own mother Kaushalya, as well as Laxman's mother Sumitra), showed due respect to them, and comforted them satisfactorily by telling them that no one is to be blamed for the unfortunate developments of the past as everything in this world is under the control of the almighty God, and nothing happens against his wishes, so there is no sense in blaming anyone for one's misfortunes¹. (Doha no. 244)

[Note—¹What Lord Ram tells his other mothers is a reiteration of what he has just a while ago said to Kaikeyi. This was another diplomatic move by Lord Ram to ensure that Kaikeyi is not singled out for condemnation by the other queens, that there should be no friction between them, that family ties and relationships continue to remain warm and affectionate. The Lord wanted to avoid a nasty situation where Kaikeyi would be forced into a corner and become as restless and ferocious as a trapped cat who would suddenly lunge forward to dig her teeth deep into the neck of her tormentor when it finds no way to escape. The Lord did not want Kaikeyi to make any more mischief in the future by helping to restore her dignity and self-respect in the eyes of others.]

Had Lord Ram shown any sort of annoyance towards Kaikeyi, directly or indirectly by any of his gestures, it would have had a negative impact on family peace and mutual goodwill between the queens. What is past is gone; what is future must be taken care of. Creating ill-will and hostility by stoking a fire symbolizing bad memory of the events of the past, a fire that is slowly dying, makes no sense; time is a great healer if one does not keep pricking old wounds and preventing them from healing themselves over time.]

चौ०. गुरतिय पद बंदे दुहु भाई । सहित बिप्रतिय जे सँग आई ॥ १ ॥
गंग गौरि सम सब सनमानीं । देहिं असीस मुदित मृदु बानीं ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

guratiya pada bandē duhu bhā'īm. sahita bipratiya jē saṁga ā'īm. 1.
gaṅga gauri sama saba sanamānīm. dēhim asīsa mudita mṛdu bānīm. 2.

The two brothers (i.e. Lord Ram and Laxman) bowed at the feet of the wife of their guru¹ to pay their respect to her, along with the wives of other Brahmins who had come with her. (1)

They were shown due respect in the same way as one would show to goddesses Ganga and Gauri (i.e. the female deity representing the holy river Ganges, and goddess Parvati, the divine consort of Lord Shiva, respectively).

The honourable wives of the Brahmins, including the wife of the guru, were pleased with the two brothers and blessed them by using pleasant words. (2)

[Note—¹The name of sage Vasistha's wife was Arundhati—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 187.]

गहि पद लगे सुमित्रा अंका । जनु भेंटी संपति अति रंका ॥ ३ ॥
पुनि जननी चरननि दोउ भ्राता । परे पेम ब्याकुल सब गाता ॥ ४ ॥
अति अनुराग अंब उर लाए । नयन सनेह सलिल अन्हवाए ॥ ५ ॥

gahi pada lagē sumitrā aṅkā. janu bhēṅṭī sampati ati raṅkā. 3.
puni jananī caranani dō'u bhrātā. parē pēma byākula saba gātā. 4.
ati anurāga amba ura lā'ē. nayana sanēha salila anhvā'ē. 5.

Then the two brothers fell down at the feet of Sumitra (who was Laxman's mother) who immediately picked them up and embraced them simultaneously as if a pauper has found an opportunity to grab a treasure.

[To wit, Sumitra tightly clasped the two brothers in her arms just like the case of a poor person tightly clasping a bag of treasure. The poor person holds the bag close to his heart, and clutches it tightly so that it is not lost. Likewise, Sumitra clutched Lord Ram and her own son Laxman most affectionately in her arms, and lovingly embraced them.] (3)

After that, the two brothers fell down at the feet of mother Kaushalya; their bodies were thrilled and they were very agitated by waves of love and affection that seemed to overwhelm them¹. (4)

The mother (Kaushalya) lifted them and clasped them to her bosom most affectionately even as tears rolled down her eyes to drench the two brothers. (5)

[Note—¹We see that Lord Ram and Laxman first met Kaikeyi, then Sumitra, and finally Kaushalya.

Lord Ram had symbolically acknowledged and expressed his deep sense of gratitude for Bharat and Laxman for being loyal to him and having so much respect for him by choosing this sequence of meeting and showing respect to all the three mothers one by one. First the Lord met Kaikeyi who was the mother of Bharat; then he met Sumitra who was Laxman's mother, and then, lastly, he met his own mother Kaushalya. This gesture of Lord Ram would certainly please Bharat and Laxman when they see that their elder brother preferred to pay his respects to their mothers first before meeting his own mother Kaushalya.

Remember: All the citizens who had accompanied Bharat to Chitrakoot were closely watching everything. When they observed how Lord Ram showed respect to Bharat's and Laxman's mothers before his own mother, and treated them all equally, everyone cheered the Lord for his graciousness and virtuousness.

Lord Ram's gestures—of meeting Kaikeyi, Sumitra and Kaushalya with equal affection and respect, and also of comforting Kaikeyi by telling her that she ought not to feel guilty, embarrassed or ashamed of herself because whatever that had happened was none of her fault but was dictated by the fiat of fate—went a long way to foster goodwill and cordial relations within the family, and it also sent a positive signal to all those who were witnessing this meeting to tell them that everything was fine and there was no trace of friction in the royal family.

This latter perception—that the royal family stood firmly united, and all its members had cordial relations with each other—was very crucial for the welfare of the kingdom, for it immediately preempted chances of any kind of conspiracy, backdoor intrigue or political drama from being played out by jealous factions and other vested interests who were inimical to peace and the good of the kingdom and welfare of the royal family, and who might have exploited dissension and friction in the royal family to settle their own selfish scores and somehow topple the cart to gain an upper hand on their rivals who were loyal and faithful to the family in particular, and the kingdom in general. If perchance this latter sort of development happened, it would be disastrous for the kingdom and a catastrophic situation for all its citizens.]

तेहि अवसर कर हरष बिषादू । किमि कबि कहै मूक जिमि स्वादू ॥ ६ ॥

मिलि जननिहि सानुज रघुराऊ । गुर सन कहेउ कि धारिअ पाऊ ॥ ७ ॥
 पुरजन पाइ मुनीस नियोगू । जल थल तकि तकि उतरेउ लोगू ॥ ८ ॥

tēhi avasara kara haraṣa biṣādū. kimi kabi kahai mūka jimi svādū. 6.
 mili jananihi sānuja raghurā'ū. gura sana kahē'u ki dhāri'a pā'ū. 7.
 purajana pā'i munīsa niyōgū. jala thala taki taki utarē'u lōgū. 8.

The emotions of joy and sorrow that permeated all over at that time are as impossible for any poet to describe as a dumb man being unable to describe the taste of any delicious food he has eaten. (6)

After Lord Ram and his younger brother (Laxman) had affectionately met all the mothers, they asked the guru (sage Vasistha) to accompany them to their hermitage. (7)

On receiving relevant orders from the sage, the citizens found for themselves proper places to put up their camps, places which were reasonably comfortable for their stay, and from where water was near¹. (8)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 197 along with Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 234.

Let us not forget that it was a large party; there were large numbers of citizens, Brahmins, servants, army men, members of the royal family, ministers, courtiers, service providers, besides animals such as horses, mules, elephants etc. Everyone cannot be accommodated in the limited area within Lord Ram's hermitage. So therefore, guru sage Vasistha ordered the different chiefs to make necessary arrangements for the groups under their command, and pitch camps at suitable places spread around the Lord's hermitage.]

दो०. महिसुर मंत्री मातु गुर गने लोग लिए साथ ।
 पावन आश्रम गवनु किय भरत लखन रघुनाथ ॥ २४५ ॥
 dōhā.

mahisura mantrī mātu gura ganē lōga li'ē sātha.
 pāvana āśrama gavanu kiya bharata lakhana raghunātha. 245.

[This verse tells us who accompanied Lord Ram to his hermitage.]

Taking along Brahmins, ministers, mothers, the guru, and many other seniors with him, Lord Ram, together with Laxman and Bharat, proceeded towards the hermitage that was holy and sanctified. (Doha no. 245)

[Note—As has been remarked in the previous verse, the majority of the people had pitched their camps in the vicinity of Lord Ram's hermitage, with only a handful of important and senior people actually accompanying the Lord to his hermitage.

It is obvious that for some time, the area around Lord Ram's hermitage must have turned into a large tent-city within the overall realm of the forest. Some pitched their tents in open ground, in some clearing in the woods, and others must have chosen the cover of surrounding trees as a good shady and cool place to rest.]

चौ०. सीय आइ मुनिबर पग लागी । उचित असीस लही मन मागी ॥ १ ॥
 गुरपतिनिहि मुनितियन्ह समेता । मिली पेमु कहि जाइ न जेता ॥ २ ॥
 बंदि बंदि पग सिय सबही के । आसिरबचन लहे प्रिय जी के ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

siya ā'i munibara paga lāgī. ucita asīsa lahī mana māgī. 1.
 gurapatinihi munitiyanha samētā. milī pēmu kahi jā'i na jētā. 2.
 bandi bandi paga siya sabahī kē. āsirabacana lahē priya jī kē. 3.

When sage Vasistha entered the hermitage, Sita came to touch his feet to seek his grace, and the sage blessed her that whatever auspicious wishes (*ucita asīsa*) she had in her mind would be fulfilled¹. (1)

Thereafter, Sita met the wife of sage Vasistha (i.e. Arundhati) and other honourable Brahmin ladies who accompanied her. It is not possible to describe the immensity of mutual respect and affection that they expressed for each other. (2)

Sita paid her respects to each of these honourable ladies by touching their feet, and in return she received liberal blessings from them that pleased her heart immensely². (3)

[Note—¹Sage Vasistha was always very careful in granting his blessings. He left enough space so that if the person whom he blesses has some bad wish in his mind, it would automatically be set aside, for only good wishes would be fulfilled—this is evident from the phrase “*ucita asīsa*”, meaning that the wish which is correct, right and proper would be granted, and not otherwise.

Further, the sage would leave on the person to decide what he or she would like to have, what would be good and the right thing for him or her to do. This style of functioning by sage Vasistha is evident when he was sent by king Dasrath to go and inform Lord Ram that he must prepare himself to be crowned as the next king of the kingdom the next day. Being all-knowing, the sage knew that it was not to be so, that it would not be proper for Lord Ram to ascend the throne at this point of time, for he had another important mission of eliminating the scourge of the demons to accomplish before assuming the responsibility of ruling the kingdom of Ayodhya.

So what did Vasistha do? He used his words in such a clever way that he was able to camouflage his advice to Lord Ram to be wary of ascending the throne then, for the Lord must remember about the primary cause of his coming down to earth as a prince of Ayodhya. It simply meant that the sage warned Lord Ram that ascending the throne of Ayodhya was not his primary concern nor was it the reason why he had descended from the heaven and came down to earth to become a human being known by the name of ‘Lord Ram’. This subtle warning alerted the Lord and he became serious. This would become clear to us when we read the following verses of Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand—viz. Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 10.

In the present context, Sita could have asked the sage to bless her in the same way she had asked the holy river Ganges to bless her earlier. What did she ask the holy river Ganges? This is narrated Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 103 along with Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precede it.

²When Sita had prayed to river Ganges, the latter had blessed her and it gave a lot of joy to Sita's heart—apropos: Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 104.]

सासु सकल जब सीयँ निहारीं । मूदे नयन सहमि सुकुमारीं ॥ ४ ॥
 परीं बधिक बस मनहुँ मरालीं । काह कीन्ह करतार कुचालीं ॥ ५ ॥
 तिन्ह सिय निरखि निपट दुखु पावा । सो सबु सहिअ जो दैउ सहावा ॥ ६ ॥

sāsu sakala jaba sīyam̐ nihārīm̐. mūdē nayana sahāmi sukumārīm̐. 4.
 parīm̐ badhika basa manahum̐ marālīm̐. kāha kīnha karatāra kucālīm̐. 5.
 tinha siya nirakhi nipaṭa dukhu pāvā. sō sabu sahi'a jō dai'u sahāvā. 6.

When Sita's mothers-in-law saw her, they closed their eyes in shock, grief and sadness at the dismal sight of her delicate frame standing before them (clad in a hermitress' dress)*.

[*There is another way in which this verse can be interpreted as follows: "When Sita saw her mothers-in-law, she was so overwhelmed with emotions that she shut her eyes as her delicate frame could not cope with the burden of sadness and grief this sight wrought on her."] (4)

It appeared that a helpless she-swan had fallen victim to the snare laid out by a cruel bird-catcher¹.

Alas! Say, what kind of cruelty and mischief had the Creator unleashed on someone who was innocent and helpless against his onslaught? (5)

All the mothers-in-law felt exceedingly sorry, remorseful, dismayed and distraught when they saw Sita. They sighed and said despondently: 'Alas, we have to bear patiently with whatever Fate decides for us, because there is no other alternative but to accept its fiat.' (6)

[Note—¹In this metaphor, Sita is the 'she-swan', and the cruel Fate is the 'bird-catcher'.]

जनकसुता तब उर धरि धीरा । नील नलिन लोयन भरि नीरा ॥ ७ ॥
 मिली सकल सासुन्ह सिय जाई । तेहि अवसर करुना महि छाई ॥ ८ ॥

janakasutā taba ura dhari dhīrā. nīla nalina lōyana bhari nīrā. 7.
 milī sakala sāsunha siya jāī. tēhi avasara karunā mahi chāī. 8.

Then Sita, the daughter of Janak (janakasutā), brought courage to her heart even as tears filled her eyes that resembled a blue lotus flower¹. (6)

Sita went forward to meet her mothers-in-law. During those moments, grief and sadness spread everywhere. (8)

[Note—¹In this analogy where Sita's eyes are compared to a blue lotus flower, we discover that the sclera and the cornea of her eyes were not white as it usually is, but softly 'bluish' in hue, resembling the colour of the sky.]

दो०. लागि लागि पग सबनि सिय भेंटति अति अनुराग ।
हृदयँ असीसहिं पेम बस रहिअहु भरी सोहाग ॥ २४६ ॥
dōhā.

lāgi lāgi paga sabani siya bhēṇṭati ati anurāga.
hr̥dayam̐ asīsahim̐ pēma basa rahi'ahu bharī sōhāga. 246.

Sita touched the feet of all the honourable Brahmin ladies one by one as she met them individually and very affectionately to seek their blessings.

They, in turn, were overcome with love for her, and they blessed her from the depths of their hearts thus: 'May you lead a very happy married life without any fear of widowhood (rahi'ahu bharī sōhāga)'¹. (Doha no. 246)

[Note—¹Sita has been blessed in a similar fashion earlier too.

For instance, mother Kaushalya has blessed her in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 69.

Later on, Sita was blessed by countless elderly women folk of villages whom she met while on the way to the forest—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 117.]

चौ०. बिकल सनेहँ सीय सब रानीं । बैठन सबहि कहेउ गुर ग्यानीं ॥ १ ॥
कहि जग गति मायिक मुनिनाथा । कहे कछुक परमारथ गाथा ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

bikala sanēham̐ sīya saba rānīm̐. baiṭhana sabahi kahē'u gura gyānīm̐. 1.
kahi jaga gati māyika munināthā. kahē kachuka paramāratha gāthā. 2.

After the preliminaries and formalities were over, the wise sage (Vasistha) observed that Sita and all the queens were feeling very uneasy and were wrought with grief. So he asked them all to sit down comfortably and relax themselves. (1)

Then to give comfort, solace and succour to all those who were present there, the enlightened sage narrated some incidences from ancient scriptures highlighting the delusionary nature of this world and the unexpected way the things may happen in it¹. The sage also gave them some discourse on spiritual matters². (2)

[Note—¹The sage had employed this method earlier too to provide comfort and moral support to those who were tormented by sorrows and grief.

For instance, in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 156 he comforts the queens upon the death of king Dasrath; (ii) then in Doha no. 169 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it the sage comforts Bharat using the same method.

²The method of giving metaphysical and spiritual discourse to grant peace and solace to one's agitated heart is employed by Laxman to soothe Nishad as narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 92—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 94.]

नृप कर सुरपुर गवनु सुनावा । सुनि रघुनाथ दुसह दुखु पावा ॥ ३ ॥
मरन हेतु निज नेहु बिचारी । भे अति बिकल धीर धुर धारी ॥ ४ ॥

nr̥pa kara surapura gavanu sunāvā. suni raghunātha dusaha dukhu pāvā. 3.
marana hētu nija nēhu bicārī. bhē ati bikala dhīra dhura dhārī. 4.

[These discourses prepared the ground and mentally firmed up Lord Ram, Laxman and Sita to cope with the bad news about king Dasrath's death that would now be conveyed by the sage.]

The sage then told Lord Ram about the death of the king (Dasrath) by saying that he has gone to the abode of the gods in the heaven (surapura gavanu sunāvā).

Hearing this bad news about the passing away of the king, Lord Ram felt extremely dismayed and distressed. (3)

The Lord's distress and sorrows were exacerbated when he learnt that he was the cause of the death of his father (because Dasrath had died as he could not bear with the grief of separation from his beloved son, Lord Ram)¹ so much so that the Lord, who is reputed to be exemplarily calm, poised and self-restrained, as well as being courageous, resilient and bold in the face of adversities, became highly agitated and affected emotionally. (4)

[Note—¹Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 81—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 82; (ii) Doha no. 155 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede it.]

कुलिस कठोर सुनत कटु बानी । बिलपत लखन सीय सब रानी ॥ ५ ॥
सोक बिकल अति सकल समाजू । मानहुँ राजु अकाजेउ आजू ॥ ६ ॥

kulisa kaṭhōra sunata kaṭu bānī. bilapata lakhana sīya saba rānī. 5.
sōka bikala ati sakala samājū. mānahum̐ rāju akājē'u ājū. 6.

The news of Dasrath's death was as harsh and piercing as the strike of a sharp weapon such as a dagger, and it caused intense grief to Laxman and Sita on the one hand, and renewed the miserable condition of the queens on the other hand. (5)

The whole assembly was tormented by grief as if the king had died that day itself¹. (6)

[Note—¹King Dasrath had died many days ago, and during the interval of his death and Bharat's arrival at Chitrakoot so many things had happened so quickly that the initial grief arising out of the king's death had subsided quite a lot as the people's minds were occupied by other thoughts of immediate concern.

But with the sage's telling Lord Ram about the king's passing away, that dormant fire of grief was stoked and it revived once again. The king was loved by his subjects, and his memory made everyone sad, gloomy and regretful.]

मुनिबर बहुरि राम समुझाए । सहित समाज सुसरित नहाए ॥ ७ ॥
ब्रतु निरंबु तेहि दिन प्रभु कीन्हा । मुनिहु कहें जलु काहुँ न लीन्हा ॥ ८ ॥

munibara bahuri rāma samujhā'ē. sahita samāja susarita nahā'ē. 7.
bratu nirambu tēhi dina prabhu kīnhā. munihu kahēm jalu kāhum'na līnhā. 8.

The sage (Vasistha) comforted Lord Ram once again, and then he, along with Lord Ram and the rest of the assembly, took a purifying bath in the auspicious river (Mandakini). (7)

That day, Lord Ram fasted rigorously and abstained from drinking water also as part of his religious exercise.

On the instructions of the sage, no one drank water that day as they all joined Lord Ram in fasting. (8)

[Note—Abstaining from food and water for a day after taking a purifying bath is a traditional ritual and a custom to pay homage to a departed soul.]

दो०. भोरु भाँ रघुनंदनहि जो मुनि आयसु दीन्ह ।
श्रद्धा भगति समेत प्रभु सो सबु सादरु कीन्ह ॥ २४७ ॥
dōhā.

bhōru bha'ēm' raghunandanahi jō muni āyasu dīnha.
śrad'dhā bhagati samēta prabhu sō sabu sādaru kīnha. 247.

The next morning at dawn¹, Lord Ram (the honourable son of the family of king Raghu to which Dasrath too belonged; “raghunandanahi”) obeyed all the instructions that the sage (Vasistha) gave him in respect to paying homage to his father. The Lord carried out all his duties with great faith, devotion and diligence as was expected from him. (Doha no. 247)

[Note—¹This is the second day of Bharat's arrival at Chitrakoot.]

चौ०. करि पितु क्रिया बेद जसि बरनी । भे पुनीत पातक तम तरनी ॥ १ ॥

जासु नाम पावक अघ तूला । सुमिरत सकल सुमंगल मूला ॥ २ ॥

सुद्ध सो भयउ साधु संमत अस । तीरथ आवाहन सुरसरि जस ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

kari pitu kriyā bēda jasi baranī. bhē punīta pātaka tama taranī. 1.

jāsu nāma pāvaka agha tūlā. sumirata sakala sumaṅgala mūlā. 2.

sud'dha sō bhaya'u sādhu sammata asa. tīratha āvāhana surasari jasa. 3.

Having performed his sacred religious duties for the departed soul (i.e. his father, king Dasrath) as prescribed by the Vedas, Lord Ram purified himself (bhē punīta) and got over the dark shadow of sins¹ just like the sun gets rid of the darkness of night (pātaka tama taranī). (1)

The Lord whose holy name (“Ram/Raam/Rām”) is so spiritually powerful and has such stupendous mystical powers that its mere utterance can burn (i.e. eliminate) all sins just like a tiny spark of fire would reduce a huge bundle of cotton to ash within a short time, as well as is so auspicious and holy that its mere remembrance grants the best of blessings and choicest of happiness to a creature², --- (2)

--- That same Lord Ram is said to have purified himself on the advice of saintly souls (here meaning sage Vasistha and other senior Brahmins as well as the sages who were present in his hermitage when Bharat’s party arrived) just to show respect to them and honour their words in the same way as river Ganges, the holy river of the gods which is pure in itself, is said to become purifying and made more holy when it passes through sacred places of pilgrimage when its powers to purify are invoked by pilgrims visiting such places*.

[*The second half of this verse regarding Ganges can be interpreted to mean: “---in the same way as river Ganges, the holy river of the gods which is pure in itself, is said to be made more holy and acquires purifying powers when it passes through consecrated places”.]³ (3)

[Note—¹What kind of sin was it which cast a dark shadow on Lord Ram, a sin which Lord Ram had to wash off by diligently following the rituals as ordained by the Vedas?

The answer is found in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 247 herein above. It is this: Lord Ram felt guilty that his father had died due to grief arising out of separation from him. It means that had the Lord accepted Dasrath’s final plea to rescind on his decision to go to the forest*, it is likely that the king wouldn’t have died at all. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 77—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 78.}

Hence, Lord Ram held himself responsible for his father’s death. This is the guilt which caused the dark shadow of the sin of being responsible for his father’s death which Lord Ram had to get rid of.

²The greatness, the holiness, the purity and the stupendous spiritual powers of Lord Ram's name have been enumerated in detail in (a) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 10; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 19—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 28; and (b) Vinai Patrika (a book of prayers written by Tulsidas), verse nos. 46, 65-70.

³Lord Ram was inherently and intrinsically auspicious, holy and pure; the Lord did not need anything external to make him more auspicious, holy and pure. But nevertheless, he took a purifying bath in deference to the wishes and to honour the advice given to him by the elderly Brahmins and sages in order to show respect to them, as well as to set an example for others that one must adhere to established traditions and respect ancient customs no matter what personal views are held by him or her on a given matter.

The example of river Ganges is cited here in this context. Everyone knows that this river has descended from the heaven, and this is why it is called the 'river of gods' (surasari) in the first place. As such, it is pure and holy in itself; it does not need a certificate for its holiness and purity. But nevertheless, when it passes through holy places and a person bathes in its waters, it is believed that the spiritual rewards are multiplied many times over. To wit, if a person takes a bath in river Ganges at some other place instead of a pilgrim place, he would surely be blessed and get spiritual merit. But if the person takes the same bath in river Ganges at some sacred site, the blessing is enhanced.

Likewise, by obeying the advice of the sages and saintly people, that he must take a purification bath after paying homage to his dead worldly father king Dasrath, Lord Ram had just followed tradition and honoured the sages and saints. His holiness and purity and auspiciousness was neither less before the bath, nor had it become more after the bath.]

सुद्ध भएँ दुइ बासर बीते । बोले गुर सन राम पिरीते ॥ ४ ॥
 नाथ लोग सब निपट दुखारी । कंद मूल फल अंबु अहारी ॥ ५ ॥
 सानुज भरतु सचिव सब माता । देखि मोहि पल जिमि जुग जाता ॥ ६ ॥
 सब समेत पुर धारिअ पाऊ । आपु इहाँ अमरावति राऊ ॥ ७ ॥
 बहुत कहेउँ सब कियउँ ढिठाई । उचित होइ तस करिअ गोसाँई ॥ ८ ॥

sud'dha bha'ēm' du'i bāsara bītē. bōlē gura sana rāma pirītē. 4.
 nātha lōga saba nipāṭa dukhārī. kanda mūla phala ambu ahārī. 5.
 sānuja bharatu saciva saba mātā. dēkhi mōhi pala jimi juga jātā. 6.
 saba samēta pura dhārī'a pā'ū. āpu ihām' amarāvati rā'ū. 7.
 bahuta kahē'um' saba kiya'um' dhiṭhā'ī. ucita hō'i tasa kari'a gōsāmī. 8.

After two days had passed since the purification rituals¹, Lord Ram spoke most affectionately to his guru (sage Vasistha) as follows. (4)

Lord Ram said to sage Vasistha: 'Oh Lord (nātha)! All the people are very distressed and sad. They are surviving by drinking water and eating frugal meals consisting of roots, stems and fruits only. (5)

Everyone is suffering and distressed, including Bharat and his younger brother (Shatrughan) along with all the mothers. The sight of this sorrowful condition of everyone has made me very pitiful, anguished and sorry, so much so that every passing minute seems to be like ages for me (because the sufferings and agonies of the people seem to bear so heavily on my mind and conscious that time appears to have stopped moving). (6)

I earnestly and most sincerely request thee to please proceed to go back to Ayodhya with everyone else² (because life in the forest is very tormenting and harsh, it is full of hardships and difficulties, and I am extremely hurt and feel distressed to see everyone suffering here due to me)³.

Further, thou art here away from the city, and the king (Dasrath) hast gone to the city of gods known as Amravati (i.e. he has died)⁴. (7)

Oh revered Lord (gōsāmī), please forgive me for being bold enough to speak before thee out of turn by giving thee unsolicited advice. But nevertheless, it was necessary for me to express my strong reservations as to the stalemate that has been created at present. Now I leave everything unto thee and rely on thine wisdom to take appropriate actions in this crucial matter.’ (8)

[Note—¹This is the 4th day since Bharat arrived in Lord Ram’s hermitage at Chitrakoot. The purification bath was done on the 1st day of arrival*1; the next morning rituals to pay homage to Dasrath were done*2, then for the next two days the party relaxed according to this verse: 1+1+2 = 4 days.

{*1 = Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precedes Doha no. 247.

*2 = Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 247 along with Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it.}

²It is abundantly clear from this verse that Lord Ram has no wish to return to Ayodhya at this point of time. The Lord had been pondering over the matter for two days, and he decided to take the guru in confidence as he was a wise and learned man, and would understand the Lord’s views and perspective in the correct light. Everyone would be obliged to obey sage Vasistha’s orders*1, and if the sage principally agrees with Lord Ram that it is better for all to return to Ayodhya, it would be so much the easier for the Lord, gradually, politely and in a subtle manner, to prevail upon Bharat and others to return home*2 because sage Vasistha too would join the Lord in turning the mind of the people in favour of returning home to Ayodhya.

{*1 = Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 305.

*2 = Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 304—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 307.}

³Lord Ram was extremely sad and distressed at the sight of the people enduring unnecessary hardships and difficulties in the harsh environs of the forest. So, he requests sage Vasistha to take everyone back home. A similar situation had developed at the time of Lord Ram leaving Ayodhya when almost the entire city had rushed behind him, because the distraught citizens declared that they can’t live without him. The people crowded around his chariot, wailing and declaring their intention to go where the Lord goes, and they went till river Tamsa where the Lord halted for the day.

Lord Ram was immensely moved by their plight, but he couldn't turn back to oblige them. So he decided to sneak away in the dead of night while the tired and grieving people were asleep. The next morning, when the weary citizens woke up, they discovered that their beloved Lord was gone. They ran here and there searching for him frantically, utterly dismayed and crazy with grief, but unable to trace him they returned home crestfallen like someone who has lost everything in this world, but since death was not in their hands the citizens had to bear with a miserable life of grief and sorrows, surviving on the hope of seeing their Lord one day in the future when he returns home after fourteen years. That hope encouraged them to pull on somehow with the drudgeries of mundane life so that they could see the dawn of that day when Lord Ram returns home to be with them once again. This episode is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 83—to Doha no. 86.

We find that Lord Ram faces a similar situation and dilemma at Chitrakoot, but with a difference. Earlier he could deftly leave the place and the citizens behind on the banks of river Tamsa, with a heavy heart though, and move on with his journey to the forest as mandated by his step-mother Kaikeyi, but here in Chitrakoot he couldn't adopt the same strategy. The reason is that while on the previous occasion he was on the move already and had the benefit of a chariot for quick exit, here in Chitrakoot he had established a dwelling by way of his hermitage of his own, and had settled in it to pass his days peacefully in the serene environment of the forest.

Besides this, on the previous occasion he was followed by the common men of the city, but now at Chitrakoot the situation was sharply different, because he was not alone, as there was a large gathering of honourable citizens present in the hermitage, which included his family members, guru Vasistha, other senior Brahmins, ministers, courtiers and noble men and women of the kingdom, besides the common people. In this situation, sneaking away in the dead of night would be an unthinkable and a most dishonourable thing for Lord Ram to attempt.

Hence, the only way out for the Lord was to quietly approach guru sage Vasistha, confide in him the Lord's reservations regarding the issue of his returning home, and request the sage to tackle the situation tactfully. The Lord knew that since sage Vasistha was a wise man and all-knowing, he certainly is expected to be aware of the actual reason why Lord Ram was going to the forest, which was to eliminate the scourge of the evil demons, and hence the Lord was confident that the sage will never create any hurdle in the successful accomplishment of this mission.

⁴The Lord means that Ayodhya has no one to look after it after the death of king Dasrath. At present none of the four brothers are present there to take charge. None of the ministers, councillors, army commanders, senior advisors and even sage Vasistha are not present in Ayodhya at this moment. This is a very dangerous situation, for this void might give the enemies a chance to attack. If there is no one to look after the city, there would be anarchy and chaos everywhere. Lord Ram says that it would be a very sinful thing if it does happen on his account, for it would bring more miseries to Ayodhya than what it is already suffering from, and the Lord would be morally responsible to provoke some greater calamity caused by negligence and childish behaviour on his part. So the Lord exhorts sage Vasistha to act with wisdom and prudence, and the only solution to this logjam is that the sage takes the initiative, to take command of the situation, and somehow prevail upon Bharat and the rest to go back home to Ayodhya and wait for the Lord to return home at the end of the designated time of fourteen years. Till that time, the sage should take charge of the

kingdom and its welfare as he was the senior-most person in it, and everyone respects and obeys him.]

दो०. धर्म सेतु करुणायतन कस न कहहु अस राम ।
लोग दुखित दिन दुइ दरस देखि लहहुँ बिश्राम ॥ २४८ ॥

dōhā.

dharma sētu karunāyatana kasa na kahahu asa rāma.
lōga dukhita dina du'i darasa dēkhi laham' biśrāma. 248.

Sage Vasistha replied: 'Oh Ram—thou art an embodiment of Dharma (i.e. you always uphold the principles of righteousness, probity, propriety, goodness in thought and conduct) as well as art most merciful and compassionate. So therefore, there is no wonder that thou art would say what thou have spoken¹.

Yes, it's true that the people art suffering, that they art distressed, agonized and tormented. So (I suggest that) let them rest for few days, say two days, and let them have the opportunity to be with thee, to see thee and have thine company for a few more days before returning home.

[Oh Ram, I request you to oblige them and let them have mental peace and recover themselves by remaining near you for few more days. I know that ultimately they have to go back to Ayodhya, but you are so merciful that it is expected from you that you won't be so harsh to turn them back so quickly after the long and tiring journey they have all undertaken for your sake. A few more days, say two or three, won't matter in the long run.]' (Doha no. 248)

[Note—¹Sage Vasistha has cited two virtues of Lord Ram here. One is 'Dharma', and the other is his 'merciful' nature.

As a responsible person it was Lord Ram's moral duty to ensure that his charge, in this case the kingdom of Ayodhya, remains safe, protected and secure, and its citizens happy and free from sufferings. This is Lord Ram's "Dharma"—moral duty and obligation. And when the Lord gave the first reason for asking Vasistha to return home, the sage appreciated the Lord's views.

The second virtue of 'mercifulness' is proved when the Lord says that he feels anguished when he sees the people suffering and surviving on frugal meals for his sake, for a forest is never a comfortable place to live. The citizens of Ayodhya had always lived a comfortable and privileged life surrounded by all sorts of material things that give comfort and pleasure, but now they have to do with a harsh surrounding for which they were not prepared. Their sufferings have pinched Lord Ram's compassionate heart. He feels pity for them and wants their sufferings to end by their going back to Ayodhya.]

चौ०. राम बचन सुनि सभय समाजू । जनु जलनिधि महुँ बिकल जहाजू ॥ १ ॥
सुनि गुर गिरा सुमंगल मूला । भयउ मनहुँ मारुत अनुकूला ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

rāma bacana suni sabhaya samājū. janu jalanidhi mahum̐ bikala jahājū. 1.
 suni gura girā sumaṅgala mūlā. bhaya'u manahum̐ māruta anukūlā. 2.

When this conversation reached the ears of the citizens, the words of Lord Ram (that he wants the people to go back to Ayodhya) caused immense consternation and distress to the people who became afraid of the impending misfortune (that it seems that Lord Ram would not agree to return to Ayodhya) just like the passengers aboard a ship became extremely agitated and scared at the prospect of the ship sinking in the ocean when they are tossed about by high waves¹. (1)

But when they heard the words of the guru (who had asked Lord Ram to have patience and let the citizens live there for a few days more so that they can enjoy his company, as well as to enable Bharat to put forward his case before a final decision can be arrived at), which were like the root of all auspiciousness and hope, the citizens felt reassured and comforted (because now there were good chances that either Bharat or someone amongst them might be able to prevail upon Lord Ram to change his mind and accompany them back home). (2)

[Note—¹The ship begins to toss about wildly and lists dangerously on one side before actually sinking in a rough sea. The passengers are on tenterhooks as soon as they see huge waves approaching them, and then suddenly the ship starts tossing about wildly and listing dangerously. This situation makes the passengers panicky as they fear for their lives, and are afraid that they won't cross over to the other side safely.

In this metaphor, the citizens are like the passengers of the ship; the words of Lord Ram, that he wants sage Vasistha to take the people back home, are like the huge waves that rock the ship because the citizens lost their peace as they were unsure what would happen next; and the fear of the passengers that the ship would sink is like the fear of the citizens that Lord Ram would not return home and that all their hopes have been dashed, for they knew how harsh and difficult life would be for them without Lord Ram's presence.]

पावन पर्यं तिहुँ काल नहाहीं । जो बिलोकि अघ ओघ नसाहीं ॥ ३ ॥
 मंगलमूरति लोचन भरि भरि । निरखहिं हरषि दंडवत करि करि ॥ ४ ॥

pāvana payam̐ tihum̐ kāla nahāhīm̐. jō bilōki agha ōgha nasāhīm̐. 3.
 maṅgalamūrati lōcana bhari bhari. nirakhahīm̐ haraṣi daṇḍavata kari kari. 4.

[The following verses, numbers 3-8, describe how the people spent their time while the party tarried at Chitrakoot for a while.]

The people took bath three times a day (morning, afternoon and evening) in the sacred waters of the river (Mandakini) which is so holy that by merely looking at its clean waters a person's sins are washed off. (3)

The river was an embodiment of auspiciousness, and the people beheld its waters till their eyes were satisfied by the view even as they bowed before it to pay their obeisance to the deity of this river. (4)

राम सैल बन देखन जाहीं । जहँ सुख सकल सकल दुख नाहीं ॥ ५ ॥
 झरना झरहिं सुधासम बारी । त्रिबिध तापहर त्रिबिध बयारी ॥ ६ ॥
 बिटप बेलि तृन अगनित जाती । फल प्रसून पल्लव बहु भाँती ॥ ७ ॥
 सुंदर सिला सुखद तरु छाहीं । जाइ बरनि बन छबि केहि पाहीं ॥ ८ ॥

rāma saila bana dēkhana jāhīm. jaham' sukha sakala sakala dukha nāhīm. 5.
 jharanā jharahim sudhāsama bārī. tribidha tāpahara tribidha bayārī. 6.
 biṭapa bēli tr̥na aganita jāti. phala prasūna pallava bahu bhāntī. 7.
 sundara silā sukhada taru chāhīm. jā'i barani bana chabi kēhi pāhīm. 8.

[In the following verses, the beauty of Nature and its comforting influence upon a person are being described.]

They would go out to roam around, and to see and enjoy the pleasant view of the surrounding hills that had been made blessed by the presence of Lord Ram in their midst because the whole place was full of peace and pleasant sights as if sorrows and misfortunes had no place for themselves there. (5)

Water as sweet as nectar fell down in streams and sprayed its nectarine freshness as it cascaded down waterfalls that abounded in those hills.

Breeze that had all the three types of pleasant qualities, such as it being cool, soft and fragrant, blew all over the place. Its soothing touch eliminated all the three kinds of torments that afflict a creature, such as worldly worries, worries about the fate and destiny, and spiritual worries. (6)

Trees, creepers and grass of a wide variety of species were present in abundance in the forest, and so were the fruits, flowers, leaves and twigs. (7)

Pleasant rocks and boulders were strewn everywhere under the shade of large trees with a wide circle of shadow around them (where people could sit and relax).

Verily indeed, in all sooth and without gainsay, the forest and hills (of Chitrakoot) were so bewitchingly beautiful and pleasant that it is not possible to describe them satisfactorily¹. (8)

[Note—¹In this context, refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 137—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 139.]

दो०. सरनि सरोरुह जल बिहग कूजत गुंजत भृंग ।
 बैर बिगत बिहरत बिपिन मृग बिहंग बहुरंग ॥ २४९ ॥
 dōhā.

sarani sarōruha jala bihaga kūjata guṇjata bhṛṅga.
 baira bigata biharata bipina mṛga bihaṅga bahuraṅga. 249.

The ponds have beautiful lotus flowers in full bloom; water birds of all feathers were chirping and flocking around merrily. Bees were similarly buzzing around in merry abundance.

Animals and birds of all species and varieties were cheerfully wondering around in the forest without any fear or animosity amongst themselves. (Doha no. 249)

[Note—Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha nos. 137 and 138.

Later on in the story, we would get a chance to read extensively about the charm and beauty of Mother Nature when Lord Ram takes up residence for some times on a mountain or a large hill known as Mt. Prabarshan at Kishkindha: apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 12—to Doha no. 17.]

चौ०. कोल किरात भिल्ल बनबासी । मधु सुचि सुंदर स्वादु सुधा सी ॥ १ ॥
 भरि भरि परन पुटीं रचि रूरी । कंद मूल फल अंकुर जूरी ॥ २ ॥
 सबहि देहिं करि बिनय प्रनामा । कहि कहि स्वाद भेद गुन नामा ॥ ३ ॥
 देहिं लोग बहु मोल न लेहीं । फेरत राम दोहाई देहीं ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

kōla kirāta bhilla banabāsī. madhu suci sundara svādu sudhā sī. 1.
 bhari bhari parana puṭīm raci rūrī. kanda mūla phala aṅkura jūrī. 2.
 sabahi dēhīm kari binaya pranāmā. kahi kahi svāda bhēda guna nāmā. 3.
 dēhīm lōga bahu mōla na lēhīm. phērata rāma dōhāī dēhīm. 4.

The members of different forest-dwelling tribes, such as the Kols, Kirats and Bhills, came with a variety of eatables as gifts for the guests. These eatables were excellent in their sweetness, succulence, texture, taste and fragrance as if they were soaked in nectar or honey. (1)

They included bulbs, edible roots, fruits and sprouts of all kinds, arranged in bowls made of leaves and twigs, and carried by the tribals in the cupped palms of their hands to be presented to the guests personally. (2)

They placed these refreshments before all the guests individually with great respect and humility, telling each one of them the names and special qualities of each item. (3)

When the people of Ayodhya (i.e. the ‘guests’) tried to reciprocate their gesture by giving something of equal value back to them, the tribesmen politely declined to accept anything by invoking the blessings of Lord Ram (saying that it was their honour that they are being of any service to the Lord and his guests, and that by the Lord’s grace they have everything worth having, and so want nothing more in return)². (4)

[Note—¹The hill-dwelling tribals had been keeping strict vigil on the hermitage of Lord Ram, to protect the Lord from any untoward development. Earlier when Lord

Ram had come to stay at Chitrakoot, these simple and humble folks had pledged their allegiance in favour of the Lord and promised him that they are at his service.

When the huge procession led by Bharat had entered the vicinity of Chitrakoot, they hurried to inform Lord Ram of the developments—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 224; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 227.

In the mean time, they readied themselves for all eventualities, in case something went wrong and unfavourable for the Lord. But when they discovered that Lord Ram had himself gone to welcome those who arrived at Chitrakoot, and took them personally to his hermitage, they became assured that these were friendly people.

²The remarkable thing to note here is that though the so-called ‘civilized world’ regarded these humble people as backward, uncivilized and oftentimes savage, the truth was completely different. These tribes had good manners; they knew how to treat guests of honour; they had natural instinct of being courteous and polite towards their guests; and they knew how to welcome and show respect to outsiders when they came a-visiting them. This is evident when we read that they came in large numbers and brought gifts and refreshments in the form of fruits, sprouts, edible stems and roots for Bharat and his party—because these were the only sort of things that were available in the forest. And the icing of this cake is their refusal to accept anything in return as a ‘price’ for the things they had brought for the guests.

We have read already that when Lord Ram came to abide for sometime in Chitrakoot, these tribesmen had visited the Lord, bringing with them similar gifts of roots, stems, fruits etc. to welcome him and show their respects to him, and to tell the Lord that they are at his service as long as he wishes to stay there. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 135—to Chaupai line no. 18 that precedes Doha no. 136.}]

कहहिं सनेह मगन मृदु बानी । मानत साधु पेम पहिचानी ॥ ५ ॥
 तुम्ह सुकृती हम नीच निषादा । पावा दरसनु राम प्रसादा ॥ ६ ॥
 हमहि अगम अति दरसु तुम्हारा । जस मरु धरनि देवधुनि धारा ॥ ७ ॥
 राम कृपाल निषाद नेवाजा । परिजन प्रजउ चाहिअ जस राजा ॥ ८ ॥

kahahim sanēha magana mṛdu bānī. mānata sādhu pēma pahicānī. 5.
 tumha sukṛtī hama nīca niṣādā. pāvā darasanu rāma prasādā. 6.
 hamahi agama ati dasu tumhārā. jasa maru dharani dēvadhuni dhārā. 7.
 rāma kṛpāla niṣāda nēvājā. parijana praja'u cahi'a jasa rājā. 8.

The tribesmen were very courteous in their refusal to accept anything for the gifts or refreshments they had brought for the guests, for when they spoke their words were very polite and full of affection for the guests: ‘Oh thou respected guests! Noble, wise and saintly people can perceive the subtle feeling of affection that is behind any gesture and action of a person; they would recognize and appreciate it.

[Therefore, it is hoped that you too would recognize our deep sense of happiness at being of service to you, and it is out of our affection and love for Lord Ram that we have brought these gifts for you, for the Lord’s guests are our guests as

well. We have not come here to trade these eatables with you; we are not merchants. We have brought these gifts out of affection and respect for you. So, please don't hurt us and our feelings by putting a price to them, and trying to pay us back in kind to square up a deal as done in commercial transactions. It would hurt us—for this was not the reason why we brought these eatables for you. We humbly request thee to accept them graciously and affectionately, for it wilt be sufficient recompense for us.] (5)

All of you are of high and noble birth, whilst we are humble, lowly and backward tribesmen¹. It is out of Lord Ram's grace that we have had the opportunity to see and serve you. (6)

It is a rarity for us humble forest-dwelling people to be able to have any interaction with high people like you just like it is a far-fetched and unrealistic dream to expect the holy river Ganges to flow in a desert land. (7)

Lord Ram has been so gracious upon Nishad (i.e. Guha Nishad, whom the Lord met and befriended at Sringeripur, and who is now a friend of Bharat as well, and has accompanied him to Chitrakoot) as to treat the latter as his dear friend.

So, we expect that the Lord's subjects would emulate the example of their Lord and treat us as their own friends too.² (8)

[Note—¹The actual word used in the text is “Nishad” (*niṣādā*). This word is usually used to mean the boatmen, but here the tribals who came with gifts for Bharat and his party were forest-dwelling people known as the Kols, Kirats and Bhills—apropos: Chaupai line no. 1 herein above).

The point to take note here is that while reading and interpreting ancient texts, we must not be bogged down too much by technicalities and dictionary meanings of different words and phrases used in the text, but understand them in a wider context, a broader perspective, and with an open mind.

To wit, the idea here is that all those who were living outside cities and other urban centers of great kingdoms were collectively called tribesmen, and there were many terms used to address them, such as Nishad, Kol, Kirat, Bhills etc. Basically they were all illiterate, lived in clusters in villages, formed closed-knit communities, used primitive arms and methods, and their general means of survival was by hunting, fishing and farming.

²Guha Nishad and Lord Ram shared an equal status in their respective realms. Guha was the chief of the tribal community of boatmen. His command and influence extended from his immediate neighbourhood of Sringeripur where he had his capital, to as far-flung areas as Chitrakoot. He was well respected and received with honours by all the tribes in the region, such as the Kols, Kirats and Bhills.

Lord Ram too commanded great respect and honour amongst kings and princes of that time; his influence was not only limited to Ayodhya which was his capital, but to far-flung realms of the world, in all its three divisions (heaven, earth, nether world). Proof of this? Well, refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 20 which explicitly endorses this fact.

Hence, the friendship between Lord Ram and Guha Nishad was a friendship between two great chiefs of their respective communities.

Drawing a parallel with their friendship, the tribesmen who came to visit the citizens, who had come to Chitrakoot with Bharat, told them that they too should emulate the example of Lord Ram and Guha Nishad by becoming friends of one another.

And therefore, when one friend visits another friend, and the host friend brings refreshments for his honoured guest, the latter must not insult the former by trying to pay for such refreshments. Rather, they should vow for a lifetime of friendship and affection for each other.

This, in short, is what the Kols, Kirats and the Bhills told the citizens of Ayodhya.]

दो०. यह जियँ जानि सँकोचु तजि करिअ छोहु लखि नेहु ।
हमहि कृतारथ करन लागि फल तृन अंकुर लेहु ॥ २५० ॥

dōhā.

yaha jiyam̐ jāni sam̐kōcu taji kari'a chōhu lakhi nēhu.
hamahi kṛtāratha karana lagi phala tṛna aṅkura lēhu. 250.

Keeping this in view, oh honourable guests, sweep aside all formalities and hesitations, and taking into account our deep sense of respect for you, please oblige us by graciously accepting the humble offerings of fruits, twigs (green edible stems and roots) and sprouts that we have brought for you.' (Doha no. 250)

चौ०. तुम्ह प्रिय पाहुने बन पगु धारे । सेवा जोगु न भाग हमारे ॥ १ ॥
देब काह हम तुम्हहि गोसाँई । ईधनु पात किरात मिताई ॥ २ ॥
यह हमारि अति बड़ि सेवकाई । लेहिं न बासन बसन चोराई ॥ ३ ॥
हम जड़ जीव जीव गन घाती । कुटिल कुचाली कुमति कुजाती ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

tumha priya pāhunē bana pagu dhārē. sēvā jōgu na bhāga hamārē. 1.
dēba kāha hama tumhahi gōsām̐. īndhanu pāta kirāta mitāī. 2.
yaha hamāri ati baḍi sēvakāī. lēhim̐ na bāsana basana cōrāī. 3.
hama jaṛa jīva jīva gana ghātī. kuṭila kucālī kumati kujātī. 4.

The simple and honest tribesmen continued: 'Thou art our honoured guests whom we all welcome heartily in the forest, but being humble and lacking the necessary wherewithal we are not lucky and able enough to give proper service to thee. (1)

What can we give you, oh respected lords? Friendship with us forest-dwelling people, known as 'Kirats' (kirāta mitāī), can have only such humble things as firewood and leaves as reward (īndhanu pāta).

[To wit, we have only simple things such as firewood and leaves to offer to our guests and friends. What we have brought for you, such as fruits, edible roots and stems as well as sprouts, are the only thing available to us to offer to our guests. So,

please don't mind us offering them to you, and accept them graciously. We don't have anything of more worth to give you as gifts. However, we have no shortage of forest produce, such as firewood and leaves and twigs, which you shall need to light a fire to cook food. Don't hesitate to ask us for it, for we have it in abundance, and we shall be happy to provide these provisions to our respected guests.] (2)

To speak the truth, it is a great service on our part that we don't rob and steal the belongings, such as clothes and utensils, of visitors (or travellers) who come to the forest (bāsana basana cōrāṭi)¹. (3)

We are uncivilized people, uncultured and uneducated, almost savage in nature (hama jāra jīva), who are cruel towards other living beings (jīva gana ghāṭi).

We are evil, wicked, do bad deeds, have a corrupt and unrefined mind, and belong to backward communities (kuṭila kucālī kumati kujāṭi). (4)

[Note—¹In ancient times, this was a great scourge that travellers had to face while traversing through remote forests and hills where robbers would waylay them and rob them of everything they had. The traveller would be lucky if he is set free after being stripped of everything, for more often than not these savage forest-dwelling tribes would kill them at the slightest provocation.

The Kirats, Kols and Bhills mean that they are treating Bharat and his party as their honourable guests, and this is why they have come to welcome them, offer eatables as gift, and express their willingness to be friendly with them. Otherwise, left on their own account, they are wild people who could have easily ambushed the party even before it reached Lord Ram's hermitage, and looted the whole entourage. That they did not do so was in itself a great service as far as they, the tribals, were concerned, for had they chosen to waylay the procession in the wilderness of the forest in an alien surrounding, Bharat's army would have been decimated and fallen like nine-pins.

These tribesmen wish to warn the well-heeled people of Ayodhya as well as the well-armed and well-trained army that accompany them, that they must not treat the former as lowly and outcast people in their own land, but rather show them due regard as equals. If any disregard is shown to these tribals, directly or indirectly, by gesture or word, by any member of Bharat's party, in spite of the humility and goodwill shown by the former, the consequences might be serious.]

पाप करत निसि बासर जाहीं । नहिं पट कटि नहिं पेट अघाहीं ॥ ५ ॥

सपनेहुँ धरम बुद्धि कस काऊ । यह रघुनंदन दरस प्रभाऊ ॥ ६ ॥

जब तें प्रभु पद पदुम निहारे । मिटे दुसह दुख दोष हमारे ॥ ७ ॥

बचन सुनत पुरजन अनुरागे । तिन्ह के भाग सराहन लागे ॥ ८ ॥

pāpa karata nisi bāsara jāhīm. nahīm paṭa kaṭi nahīm pēṭa aghāhīm. 5.
sapanēhum' dharama bud'dhi kasa kā'ū. yaha raghunandana darasa prabhā'ū.
6.

jaba tēm prabhu pada paduma nihārē. miṭē dusaha dukha dōṣa hamārē. 7.
bacana sunata purajana anurāgē. tinha kē bhāga sarāhana lāgē. 8.

Our days and nights (i.e. our whole lives) are spent in committing sins and offenses of different kinds. Neither do we have proper clothes to wear and wrap around our waists, nor are our stomachs filled sufficiently by food inspite of committing all evil things to fulfill these basic necessities of life.

[To wit, we hunt wild animals for food, and rob travellers every day for petty things. But alas, our needs are never satisfied, and so our entire lives are spent in continuing with this vicious cycle, day in and day out.] (5)

In this context, the sudden thought of abstaining from waylaying and looting your party, and instead of doing that evil deed, to bring gifts for you in the form of fresh fruits, edible roots and stems, sprouts, firewood and bowls made of leaves, is surely a result of Lord Ram's grace upon us that has changed our basic nature, purified our thoughts, and corrected our attitude. (6)

Verily indeed, we unequivocally proclaim that ever since we have had the good fortune to see the lotus-like feet of Lord Ram, it has had such a profound influence upon us that all our wildness and wickedness, all our sorrows and wants, all our faults and shortcomings have been done away with.

[To wit, ever since we have been blessed by Lord Ram, a sea-change has taken place in all of us. Our whole community has undergone a drastic change in its attitude and outlook for life. We have stopped looting and killing innocent creatures. We live a contended life with whatever is available to us. We love God and show respect to him. Virtues of love and affection, goodness and courteousness, friendship and brotherhood, piety and devotion, which were all alien to us, are now a part of our ethos.] (7)

When the citizens heard these submissions of the tribesmen, all felt very happy and began to praise the good luck of these humble people.

[To wit, the people of Ayodhya realized the good effect that contact with Lord Ram could have on others. These tribals have changed for good, their lives have undergone a transformation, making them good people, worthy of respect and befriending.] (8)

छं०. लागे सराहन भाग सब अनुराग बचन सुनावहीं । १ ।
बोलनि मिलनि सिय राम चरन सनेहु लखि सुखु पावहीं ॥ २ ॥
नर नारि निदरहिं नेहु निज सुनि कोल भिल्लनि की गिरा । ३ ।
तुलसी कृपा रघुबंसमनि की लोह लै लौका तिरा ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

lāgē sarāhana bhāga saba anurāga bacana sunāvahīm. 1.
bōlani milani siya rāma carana sanēhu lakhi sukhu pāvahīm. 2.
nara nāri nidarahīm nēhu nija suni kōla bhillani kī girā. 3.
tulasī kṛpā raghubansamani kī lōha lai laukā tirā. 4.

Everyone amongst the citizens of Ayodhya began to praise the good luck of these humble tribesmen, and spoke affectionately regarding them¹. (Chanda line no. 1)

They appreciated the tribesmen's way of speaking courteously, their good manners, the affectionate way they had welcomed their guest, as well as their devotion and affection for Lord Ram and his holy feet. This gave the citizens great joy. (Chanda line no. 2)

When the males and the females (i.e. the citizens) heard the way the Kols and the Bhills spoke in polite terms, with a lot of courtesy and good manners, they felt shy and ashamed of themselves (that they had falsely claimed themselves to be civilized and have good manners, for even these illiterate and so-called wild people could be so nice and courteous in their behaviour by the grace of Lord Ram).

[To wit, the citizens realized that whatever good things they have and boast about, are due to the blessing and grace of Lord Ram, and not due to their own effort.] (Chanda line no. 3)

Tulsidas says that if Lord Ram is favourable and grants his grace, then a block of iron can float on water with a boat loaded on it.

[Usually, a boat floats on water and a load of iron is placed inside it. If the iron is put directly on the surface of water, it would sink immediately. But the opposite may also happen, as if by some miracle, if Lord Ram so wants—i.e. a block of iron may float on water with a boat tied on its top. In the present context it means that these forest-dwelling people, who are by nature uncivil, wild, un-cultured and savage, are not expected to behave courteously and show good manners that are expected from educated, cultured and civilized people. But it is Lord Ram's grace upon them that this is exactly how they behaved while interacting with the citizens of Ayodhya, which had left the latter awe-stricken. The citizens then realized that this miraculous transformation had happened by the grace of Lord Ram.]² (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 135; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 136.

²In this context, refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Sundar Kand, (ii) Doha no. 16; (ii) Doha no. 33; (b) Lanka Kand, (iii) Doha no. 3 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it; (c) Uttar Kand, (iv) Doha no. 119-b; (v) Doha no. 122-b.]

सो०. बिहरहिं बन चहु ओर प्रतिदिन प्रमुदित लोग सब ।
जल ज्यों दादुर मोर भए पीन पावस प्रथम ॥ २५१ ॥
sōraṭhā.

biharahim bana cahu ōra pratidina pramudita lōga saba.
jala jyōm dādura mōra bha'ē pīna pāvasa prathama. 251.

The people roamed cheerfully around the forest in all directions every day. They felt exhilarated and very happy just like the first shower of rain brings cheer to the frog and the peacock who begin to croak and dance merrily¹. (Sortha no. 251)

[Note—¹We have read earlier that when Lord Ram came to abide for sometime in Chitrakoot, and the Kols and Kirats had come to pay their respects to the Lord, the latter had offered to serve the Lord in all possible ways, such as to escort him and

show him around the countless scenic spots of Chitrakoot, its lush green forests, meadows, dales and undulating hills, as well as to accompany the Lord should he like to go for game—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 136.

Hence it is understood that the tribals offered a similar service to the citizens while they camped at Chitrakoot. They accompanied the people wherever they wished to go sightseeing, and pointed out to them many beautiful places worth noting.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 249 herein above.]

चौ०. पुर जन नारि मगन अति प्रीती । बासर जाहिं पलक सम बीती ॥ १ ॥
 सीय सासु प्रति बेष बनाई । सादर करइ सरिस सेवकाई ॥ २ ॥
 लखा न मरमु राम बिनु काहूँ । माया सब सिय माया माहूँ ॥ ३ ॥
 सीयँ सासु सेवा बस कीन्हीं । तिन्ह लहि सुख सिख आसिष दीन्हीं ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

pura jana nāri magana ati prīti. bāsara jāhiṁ palaka sama bīti. 1.
 siya sāsū prati bēṣa banāī. sādara kara'i sarisa sēvakāī. 2.
 lakhā na maramu rāma binu kāhūṁ. māyā saba siya māyā māhūṁ. 3.
 siyam sāsū sēvā basa kīnhīṁ. tinha lahi sukha sikha āsiṣa dīnhīṁ. 4.

All the citizens, the men as well as the women, were so ecstatic with joy and so happy that they lost track of time and day, for the time spent in merry-making and enjoying the beauty of Chitrakoot and its charming environment appeared to make the days fly away so swiftly as if they were merely a few moments¹. (1)

Meanwhile, Sita served all her mothers-in-law personally by assuming many forms to attend to them simultaneously, serving them all with equal affection, diligence and care². (2)

No one could see the secret behind this magical feat of Sita (that she served all her mothers-in-law simultaneously, by assuming many forms at the same time) except Lord Ram who knew who she actually was³.

It was the Lord alone who could understand that whatever was happening was a magical feat achieved by Sita who invoked her mystical powers to create a smokescreen that made things so surreal that no one had an inkling of the reality⁴.

[To wit, Lord Ram knew that Sita was a personified form of 'Maya', the cosmic powers of the Supreme Being that can create magical scenes that are so real in appearance that the beholder is made to believe them to be true, though in reality they aren't.] (3)

However, Sita served all her mothers-in-law so sincerely and with due diligence that all of them were very contented by her service and blessed her profusely. (4)

[Note—¹Happy times always seem to fly away very quickly, whilst times of sorrows and grief appear to drag on endlessly.]

We have read earlier how good times fly away so swiftly that a person won't even realize that so many days have passed—in this context, refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 195 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 197 (celebration time in Ayodhya when Lord Ram and his brothers were born); (iii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 312 (the wait of Lord Ram's marriage party at Janakpur for the commencement of the marriage rituals).

As for bad times that seem to drag on endlessly, refer to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 158 (Bharat's feelings when he had a notion that something very serious had happened at Ayodhya during his absence); (b) Sundar Kand, (ii) Doha no. 31 (how Sita spent her miserable days in captivity in Lanka).

²We have read a short while ago that sage Vaisistha asked Lord Ram to have patience and let the distraught citizens rest for a few more days before returning to Ayodhya—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 248 herein above.

So, while the citizens spent their time outdoors wandering in the forest and hills of Chitrakoot, enjoying its natural beauty and charm, Sita spent her time in-doors serving her mothers-in-law.

But, it will be interesting to note what Bharat was doing in the meanwhile? We shall read that he spent his time worrying if he would succeed in taking Lord Ram back to Ayodhya with him—apropos: Doha no. 252 herein below.

³To wit, each mother-in-law thought that Sita was attending her exclusively at all times of the day, but this was made possible because Sita had assumed many forms by taking recourse to 'Maya' (magical powers that create delusions), the cosmic powers possessed by Mother Goddess known as 'Shakti', for it was Shakti which had revealed herself in the form of Sita to help the Supreme Being fulfill his mission of eliminating the demons. This fact is expressly stated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 187 where the Supreme Being tells gods, mother earth and the sages that he would come down to earth personally and would be accompanied by his Shakti in order to eliminate the demons.

Sita's mystical form as a manifestation of 'Maya' is expressly stated by sage Valmiki in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chanda line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 126.

Sita's mystical powers are also revealed in Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 148; (b) Aranya Kand, (ii) Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 24.

Given this background, it is no wonder that she could assume many forms at the same time and serve her mothers-in-law simultaneously.

⁴We have read earlier that when Lord Ram's marriage procession arrived at Janakpur, Sita had invoked her mystical powers to create a wonderland of comfort and pleasure for the guests. At that time too only Lord Ram could understand the mystery behind what was happening. Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 306—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 307.]

लखि सिय सहित सरल दोउ भाई । कुटिल रानि पछितानि अघाई ॥ ५ ॥

अवनि जमहि जाचति कैकेई । महि न बीचु बिधि मीचु न देई ॥ ६ ॥

lakhi siya sahita sarala dō'u bhā'ī. kuṭila rāni pachitāni aghā'ī. 5.
avani jamahi jācati kaikē'ī. mahi na bīcu bidhi mīcu na dē'ī. 6.

Observing the humility, courteousness and affectionate demeanours of Sita and the two brothers (Lord Ram and Laxman), the wicked queen (Kaikeyi) was overwhelmed with remorse so much so that she regretted immensely and could not console herself sufficiently regarding what she had done. (5)

Kaikeyi's sense of guilt, remorse and repentance were so intense that she prayed to Mother Earth and to Yam (the god of death) to relieve her from her mental torments, but none paid heed to her appeals.

[To wit, Kaikeyi prayed to earth to open up and devour her. Similarly, she beseeched the god of death to grant her deliverance from the torments she is suffering from by ending her life. But none of them listened to her. Why? The answer is given in the following verse no. 7 herein below.] (6)

लोकहुँ बेद बिदित कबि कहहीं । राम बिमुख थलु नरक न लहहीं ॥ ७ ॥
यहु संसुड सब के मन माहीं । राम गवनु बिधि अवध कि नाहीं ॥ ८ ॥

lōkahuṁ bēda bidita kabi kahahīm. rāma bimukha thalu naraka na lahahīm. 7.
yahu sansa'u saba kē mana māhīm. rāma gavanu bidhi avadha ki nāhīm. 8.

It is well established in the world, and even the Vedas and wise people affirm that for those who are opposed to Lord Ram, those who are inimically inclined towards the Lord, there is no place for them even in hell¹. (7)

In the meantime, there was an issue that caused constant worry in everyone's mind: 'Oh Creator (bidhi),' they wondered, 'will or will not Lord Ram return to Ayodhya?' (8)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 2 (where we read that Jayant, the crow, who had pricked Sita and fled when Lord Ram shot a symbolic arrow in the form of a twig to punish him for his mischief, went in all the corners of the world to hide himself and escape the arrow, but no one gave him shelter against Lord Ram).

A similar idea is expressed in umpteen numbers of verses in Ram Charit Manas. For instance, refer to: (a) Sundar Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 23 (Hanuman advises Ravana to discard his animosity with Lord Ram for otherwise he would have no where to go); (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 39 (Vibhishan's advice to Ravana); (b) Lanka Kand, (iii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 6 (Mandodari's stern warning to Ravana); (iv) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 27 (Angad's warning to Ravana in this respect); (v) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 35; (vi) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 37 (Mandodari pleads with Ravana to stop being inimical to Lord Ram).]

दो०. निसि न नीद नहिं भूख दिन भरतु बिकल सुचि सोच ।
नीच कीच बिच मगन जस मीनहि सलिल सँकोच ॥ २५२ ॥

dōhā.

nisi na nīda nahim bhūkha dina bharatu bikala suci sōca.
nīca kīca bica magana jasa mīnahi salila saṁkōca. 252.

Bharat's mental condition was precarious; he was overcome with pious thoughts revolving around the prospect of Lord Ram returning to Ayodhya. He remained so agitated and emotionally upset that he could not sleep during the night, and neither did he have any appetite for food during the day.

His condition can be likened to a poor fish which finds itself trapped in a shallow pool of dirty water, not sure how long the muddy water would be able to sustain it, when the water would completely dry up, or when would it have access to clean water, if that is possible at all before its death. (Doha no. 252)

[Note—The poor fish becomes extremely alarmed when it finds that water in the pool is drying up fast with no certainty of what is in store for it in the future.

Similarly, options before Bharat were very limited, and this kept him on tenterhooks. His worries were exacerbated when he learnt that Lord Ram has asked sage Vasistha to return home (apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 248). This clearly meant that the Lord has no intention to return home.

Not only Bharat, but every citizen had this question on their mind—whether or not Lord Ram would oblige them by heeding their prayers to return home. Refer: Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes this Doha no. 252.]

चौ०. कीन्हि मातु मिस काल कुचाली । इति भीति जस पाकत साली ॥ १ ॥
केहि बिधि होइ राम अभिषेकू । मोहि अवकलत उपाउ न एकू ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kīnhi mātu misa kāla kucālī. īti bhīti jasa pākata sālī. 1.
kēhi bidhi hō'i rāma abhiṣēkū. mōhi avakalata upā'u na ēkū. 2.

[The following verse nos. 1-7 are an extension of Doha no. 252 herein above inasmuch as they narrate the worries and doubts that clouded Bharat's mind and kept him restless throughout the night.]

Bharat thought gloomily: 'Well, misfortunes and the cruel fiat of fate disguised themselves as my mother (Kaikeyi) to wreak havoc on me even as attack of pests bring destruction to the crop just as it is getting ready to be harvested¹. (1)

How Lord Ram would be anointed to the throne: I don't see anyway of it actually happening; I have no idea how it will come to fruition². (2)

[Note—¹In this metaphor, Bharat means that if his evil fate had not manipulated the mind of his mother then Lord Ram would have peacefully ascended the throne, and Bharat would have been spared of the huge ignominy that he has had to face in the wake of the stupidity his mother displayed by precipitating a crisis that threw the whole kingdom in a spin of miseries and grief.

It is just like the case of a happy farmer is getting ready to harvest his crop when all of a sudden he is struck by misfortunes that reveal itself in the form of an attack by pests that ruin his harvest.

²In this context, we must recall such doubts and fears had been bearing down heavily on Bharat's mind for a long time, even before he had actually arrived at the Lord's hermitage—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 233—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 234.

Immediately thereafter, Guha Nishad and Bharat had observed certain omens while entering Chitrakoot, which hinted to Bharat that though initially he would be successful in his mission, which meant he would be able to meet Lord Ram who would welcome him warmly and affectionately, thereby removing one great cause of regret which had been provoked the greatest pain in Bharat's heart, i.e. the thought that Lord Ram's love for him has taken a hit, and the Lord thinks that Bharat was responsible for his forest exile so that he could usurp the kingdom, but in the end there would be grief, which means that ultimately he would fail to take the Lord back home. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 234 along with Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it.}

Bharat's fears were not completely unfounded though. We have read a little while ago that that Lord Ram has asked their guru, sage Vasistha, to take the party back to Ayodhya, which meant that the Lord was in no mood to return. Further, during this conversation, even the sage had not talked anything about his returning home, but only requested the Lord to have patience for a few more days so that the tired citizens could take rest and relax for a sometime while they get a chance to stay close to the Lord and enjoy his company for which they have strong longing. This obviously meant that the sage knew that ultimately they would have to return home, without Lord Ram. It ought to be remarked here that this conversation between sage Vasistha and Lord Ram was no secret as it had become known to everyone in the party so much so that it had made all the citizens sad and despondent. {Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 248—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 249.}}

अवसि फिरहिं गुर आयसु मानी । मुनि पुनि कहब राम रुचि जानी ॥ ३ ॥

मातु कहेहुँ बहुरहिं रघुराऊ । राम जननि हठ करबि कि काऊ ॥ ४ ॥

avasi phirahim gura āyasu mānī. muni puni kahaba rāma ruci jānī. 3.
mātu kahēhum bahurahim raghurā'ū. rāma janani haṭha karabi ki kā'ū. 4.

It is true that the Lord would certainly obey the guru's command in this respect, but the big question is that the sage would speak to him to return home only if he realizes that the Lord wishes to do so.

[To wit, sage Vasistha would never force anything on Lord Ram. The sage would say only such and such thing which Lord Ram would approve, but nothing to the contrary.]¹ (3)

There is another option: Lord Ram (“raghurā'ū”; the Lord of the Raghus) can also return home if his mother (Kaushalya) says so. But once again, will the mother insist on it; would she be able to impose her will on the Lord? I doubt it². (4)

[Note—¹This is already clear in the developments of the past. For instance, the sage did not stop the Lord from going to the forest, and neither did he intervene in the family feud to override Dasrath's instructions in this regard, though theoretically he could do so as he was the chief priest of the family as well as the kingdom, and everyone respected him and obeyed his commands. Lord Ram had gone to Vasistha's home to take his blessings before leaving Ayodhya for the forest, and even at that time the sage kept mum. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 80—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 81.}

Then once again, Bharat had lost his confidence in the ability of sage Vasistha to be affirmative enough to prevail upon others and enforce his orders on them, as Bharat had himself defied the sage's earnest requests to accept the crown, and Vasistha could not do anything about it. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 171—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 176; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 182—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 183.}

This being the case, there is but feeble chance that the sage would say anything that Lord Ram would not like to do, and since the Lord had no intention to return home*, the chances of sage Vasistha insisting on the Lord to accept the crown and come back to Ayodhya were almost nil. {*This is evident when the Lord had refused to heed Sumantra's pleadings to return home. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 94—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 96; (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 99—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 100.}

²Once again, Bharat's doubts were not without reason. If mother Kaushalya could not stop Lord Ram from going to the forest in the very beginning*1, though she theoretically could have done so as she was his 'mother', and a “mother's orders take precedence over the father's*2”, then what chances are there now that she would prevail upon Lord Ram to rescind on his vows to spend fourteen years in the forest when he is already there? To wit, the chances are nil.

{Refer: *1 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 53—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 57.

*2 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 56.}]

मोहि अनुचर कर केतिक बाता । तेहि महँ कुसमउ बाम बिधाता ॥ ५ ॥

जौं हठ करउँ त निपट कुकरमू । हरगिरि तें गुरु सेवक धरमू ॥ ६ ॥

mōhi anucara kara kētika bātā. tēhi maham' kusama'u bāma bidhātā. 5.
jauṁ haṭha kara'um'ta nipaṭa kukaramū. haragiri tēm guru sēvaka dharamū.

6.

[Bharat rues despondently—] ‘When the chances of the guru, sage Vasistha, and the mother, Kaushalya, being able to prevail upon Lord Ram to accept the crown and return home are as good as nil, say then what chance I stand have, for I am a mere humble servant of the Lord. And the matter is made worse by the fact that the Fate is against me and so is the Creator. [Hence, even if there was a thin chance of my being able to somehow successfully plead with the Lord to return home and accept the crown, my evil Fate and unfavourable Creator would throw a spanner in the wheel, and derail everything.] (5)

On the other hand, suppose I show adamancy and become stubborn in my insistence of Lord Ram returning home and accepting the crown, well say then it would be highly objectionable for me to behave that way; it would be highly unrighteous and totally unacceptable for me to force my will on my Lord—for it would be a grave sin, and a most reprehensible thing for me to contemplate doing.

This is because the duty of a servant is more difficult to perform than the lifting of Mt. Kailash where Lord Shiva has his abode.

[To wit, it is possible to lift a heavy mountain such as Kailash, but to perform one’s duty towards one’s Lord, obediently and diligently, without asking questions, is a difficult task. I am not supposed to question Lord Ram’s decisions; I am not expected to force my will upon him; I just can’t do it.]’ (6)

एकउ जुगुति न मन ठहरानी । सोचत भरतहि रैन बिहानी ॥ ७ ॥
प्रात नहाइ प्रभुहि सिर नाई । बैठत पठए रिषयँ बोलाई ॥ ८ ॥

ēka'u juguti na mana ṭaharānī. sōcata bharatahi raini bihānī. 7.
prāta nahā'i prabhuhi sira nā'ī. baiṭhata paṭha'ē riṣayam' bōlā'ī. 8.

In this way, Bharat was very confounded; he could not decide on any device or means by which he could be sure that his aim of anointing Lord Ram to the throne and taking him back home¹ would be realized.

He spent the night in making wild speculations, till the day dawned. (7)

In the morning, Bharat took his bath and was about to sit down near Lord Ram when sage Vasistha sent a message, calling for him. (8)

[Note—¹Bharat had two clear goals in mind—one was to take Lord Ram back to Ayodhya*1, and the other was to anoint him on the throne of the kingdom in a symbolic way in the forest itself*2, so that no time is wasted.

These two aims are clearly spelt out by him in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, *1 = Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 183; and *2 = Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 187.]

दो०. गुर पद कमल प्रनामु करि बैठे आयसु पाइ ।
बिप्र महाजन सचिव सब जुरे सभासद आइ ॥ २५३ ॥

dōhā.

gura pada kamala pranāmu kari baiṭhē āyasu pā'i.
bipra mahājana saciva saba jurē sabhāsada ā'i. 253.

Bharat went and bowed before the lotus-like holy feet of his guru (sage Vasistha), and sat down when ordered by the guru to do so.

Brahmins, senior citizens, ministers, courtiers and royal advisors etc.—all came and assembled there. (Doha no. 253)

[Note—This was the first conference held at Chitrakoot. It was called by sage Vasistha to thrash out a solution for the vexed problem, and it was attended by Bharat and all important persons in the party.

It was summoned by the sage to discuss and devise the strategy to be adopted and the line of action to be taken so that some acceptable solution can be found. It was held in private, and away from earshot of Lord Ram.

Briefly, during this meeting it was decided that Bharat and his younger brother Shatrughan would offer themselves to go to the forest in the place of Lord Ram and Laxman, so that the Lord could return home in the stead of Bharat*1. Bharat gladly accepted this option. Then, the whole group went to meet Lord Ram to see what could be done*2. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, *1 = Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 256; and *2 = Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 257 herein below.}

Only seniors attended this meeting, whilst the rest of the citizens spent their time either relaxing in their camps, or going out sightseeing around Chitrakoot as is clearly mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 249.]

चौ०. बोले मुनिबरु समय समाना । सुनहु सभासद भरत सुजाना ॥ १ ॥
धरम धुरीन भानुकुल भानू । राजा रामु स्वबस भगवानू ॥ २ ॥
सत्यसंध पालक श्रुति सेतू । राम जनमु जग मंगल हेतू ॥ ३ ॥
गुर पितु मातु बचन अनुसारि । खल दलु दलन देव हितकारी ॥ ४ ॥
नीति प्रीति परमारथ स्वारथु । कोउ न राम सम जान जथारथु ॥ ५ ॥

caupā'i.

bōlē munibaru samaya samānā. sunahu sabhāsada bharata sujānā. 1.
dharama dhurīna bhānukula bhānū. rājā rāmu svabasa bhagavānū. 2.
satyasandha pālaka śruti sētū. rāma janamu jaga maṅgala hētū. 3.
gura pitu mātu bacana anusārī. khala dalu dalana dēva hitakārī. 4.
nīti prīti paramāratha svārathu. kō'u na rāma sama jāna jathārathu. 5.

Addressing the gathering, the exalted sage (Vasistha) spoke words that were appropriate for the occasion: 'Listen all the councilors and the gentleman Bharat (bharata sujānā). (1)

In all sooth, Lord Ram is an expert in the principles of Dharma (righteousness, probity, propriety, goodness of thought and conduct) (dharama dhurīna); he is like a sun of the Solar Race (bhānukula bhānū).

Being a King (rājā rāmu), he is not dependent upon anyone and neither fettered by anything (svabasa), and he has all the virtues that elevate him to the high pedestal of Godhood (bhagavānū). (2)

Verily indeed, the Lord is steadfast in upholding the sanctity of Truth (satyasandha), and is a protector of the discipline of the Vedas (pālaka śruti sētū).

Lord Ram has taken birth in this world for its good and well-being (rāma janamu jaga maṅgala hētū). (3)

He is obedient to his guru, father and mother, and follows their instructions (gura pitu mātu bacana anusārī).

On the one hand he is a vanquisher of all those who are evil, wicked and sinful (khala dalu dalana), and on the other hand he looks after the welfare of the gods and those who have god-like characteristics (dēva hitakārī). (4)

No one else knows and understands in depth the real meaning and the practical import of such virtues as (kō'u na rāma sama jāna jathārathu) 'Niti' (rules of proper conduct; propriety and probity), 'Priti' (having cordial relations; being amiable; virtues of love, affection and endearment), 'Parmartha' (spiritual values; high ideals of life with a bearing on one's spiritual welfare), and 'Swartha' (interests related to the world and how one would ensure one's own good in it) (nīti prīti paramāratha svārathu). (5)

[Note—In the above verses, sage Vasistha outlines the outstanding qualities of Lord Ram in his opening statement. It was done with the purpose of preparing everyone psychologically to be ready to accept the final decision of Lord Ram, instead of arguing with him and trying to impose their own will on him.

The sage implies that at the end it would be good for all to let Lord Ram have the final say in the matter, because whatever the Lord decides would be the best thing to do under the prevailing circumstances—apropos: Doha no. 254 herein below. The Lord's decision should be accepted by everyone, for the Lord would never do anything that is against anyone, that harms the interest of anyone, or which violates the principles of Dharma and the sanctity of Truthfulness. Since Lord Ram is compassionate and merciful, he would always take into consideration the feeling of others while deciding on any matter, but often times it becomes necessary to endure a bit of suffering for larger good, and one must gladly accept it for a better future.

It ought to be noted that sage Vasistha was aware that ultimately Bharat's request to Lord Ram to accept the crown and return home will not be accepted by the Lord, so the wise sage decided to build a background and mentally prepare Bharat to face that eventuality.

In the context of the qualities listed here, there are umpteen numbers of verses in Ram Charit Manas where they are also reiterated. For instance: (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 51; (ii) Doha no. 121; (iii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 137; (iv) Chanda line nos. 1-9, 11-16 that precede Doha no. 186; (v) Doha no. 191; (vi) Doha no. 192; (vii) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 197; (viii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 200; (ix) Chaupai line

nos. 5, 7-8 that precede Doha no. 205; (b) Ayodhya Kand, (x) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 28; (xi) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 82; (xii) Chanda line nos. 1-2 and 4 that precede Doha no. 126; (xiii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 220; (xiv) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precedes Doha no. 243; (c) Uttar Kand, (xv) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 20.]

बिधि हरि हरु ससि रबि दिसिपाला । माया जीव करम कुलि काला ॥ ६ ॥
 अहिप महिप जहँ लगि प्रभुताई । जोग सिद्धि निगमागम गाई ॥ ७ ॥
 करि बिचार जियँ देखहु नीकें । राम रजाइ सीस सबही कें ॥ ८ ॥

bidhi hari haru sasi rabi disipālā. māyā jīva karama kuli kālā. 6.
 ahipa mahipa jaham̐ lagi prabhutā'ī. jōga sid'dhi nigamāgama gā'ī. 7.
 kari bicāra jiyam̐ dēkhahu nīkēm. rāma rajā'ī sīsa sabahī kēm. 8.

[In the following verses, sage Vasistha emphasizes that the entire creation, from the top of the hierarchy right to its bottom, are governed by the Supreme Being known as Lord Ram. All of them bow their heads before the Lord and obey his commands.]

Every entity, every single unit of this creation, starting from the Trinity Gods such as Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva (bidhi hari haru), followed by the Moon and the Sun (sasi rabi), the various custodian-Gods of the different directions (disipālā), Maya (the deluding powers of the Supreme Being—"māyā"), Jiva (the creature; the living being—"jīva"), all Karma (actions of creatures) and Kaals (time factors; eras; periods) (karama kuli kālā), --- (6)

Those who support the earth, both by holding it aloft from below, such as the celestial serpent (who is said to hold the earth on its hoods—"ahipa"), as well as those who look after it on its surface, such as the many kings whose rule extend over the surface of the earth (mahipa jaham̐ lagi prabhutā'ī), Yogis (ascetics; spiritually powerful people—"jōga"), Siddhas (those who have mystical powers; all deities who preside over success and achievement—"sid'dhi") as outlined by the Vedas and Purans (nigamāgama gā'ī), --- (7)

Well, think carefully and contemplate over the matter seriously, and you will discover that (kari bicāra jiyam̐ dēkhahu nīkēm) all of them, without exception, are obedient to Lord Ram, and they carry out his orders with a bowed head (or, they bow their heads before Lord Ram and obediently carry out his instructions, without arguing or questioning him) (rāma rajā'ī sīsa sabahī kēm).

[To wit, this being the case, how can we go against the wishes of Lord Ram? Hence, though it is alright for us to put our case before Lord Ram just like a subject of a kingdom has the right to approach his king with a petition to put forward his case, but after that we must be prepared to accept the decision of the Lord without fuss and regrets. We must be ready to obediently accept whatever Lord Ram tells us to do just like the case of the subject of a kingdom graciously accepting the decision of the king when he delivers his judgment on his petition.]¹ (8)

[Note—¹One must obey Lord Ram's commands with a bowed head and without asking questions*1 as the Lord always thinks of the good of his devotee*2.

{*1 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 266; (ii) Doha no. 269 along with Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes it; (iii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 298; (iv) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 307.

* = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 208.}]

दो०. राखें राम रजाइ रुख हम सब कर हित होइ ।

समुझि सयाने करहु अब सब मिलि संमत सोइ ॥ २५४ ॥

dōhā.

rākhēṁ rāma rajā'i rukha hama saba kara hita hō'i.

samujhi sayānē karahu aba saba mili sammata sō'i. 254.

Thus, it will be in our interest, and it would serve us well, to obey the wishes of Lord Ram and follow his instructions.

All of you are wise and intelligent. So therefore, keeping what I have said in mind, think over the matter collectively and decide on the course of action unanimously.' (Doha no. 254)

चौ०. सब कहूँ सुखद राम अभिषेकू । मंगल मोद मूल मग एकू ॥ १ ॥

केहि बिधि अवध चलहिं रघुराऊ । कहहु समुझि सोइ करिअ उपाऊ ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

saba kahum̐ sukhada rāma abhiṣēkū. maṅgala mōda mūla maga ēkū. 1.

kēhi bidhi avadha calahiṁ raghurā'ū. kahahu samujhi sō'i kari'a upā'ū. 2.

The sage continued: 'It is indeed true (and I agree myself) that Lord Ram's anointment to the throne will give happiness to all, and it is the only way and the single root that would provide joy, cheer and auspiciousness to everyone¹. (1)

So now, how Lord Ram would come back to Ayodhya so that his anointment can be done is a matter that all of you must first consider seriously, and then articulate it so that we can give effect to that plan. (2)

[Note—¹Earlier, sage Vasistha had observed how everyone had preferred that Lord Ram be brought back from the forest and anointed as the next king—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 183—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 185; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 186.

So, now he wants to make clear that personally he too would like the same thing to happen, that Lord Ram returns to Ayodhya and accepts the crown of the kingdom. The wise sage wished to allay any misgivings and doubts in the minds of the people that he secretly was against Lord Ram coming back to Ayodhya or of his

anointment to the throne, because his earlier statements had shown that he was not emphatic regarding Lord Ram's return and his appointment as the King, but rather preferred to remain silent on the matter by adopting a wait-and-watch posture and skirting the main issue by cleverly circumventing it as can clearly be interpreted from what he has said in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 254 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it.]

सब सादर सुनि मुनिबर बानी । नय परमारथ स्वारथ सानी ॥ ३ ॥

उतरु न आव लोग भए भोरे । तब सिरु नाइ भरत कर जोरे ॥ ४ ॥

saba sādara suni munibara bānī. naya paramāratha svāratha sānī. 3.
utaru na āva lōga bha'ē bhōrē. taba siru nā'i bharata kara jōrē. 4.

Everyone in the assembly listened very carefully, and with due reverence, to the wise and well considered words of the learned sage, words that were imbued with wisdom, were in accordance with established rules of conduct, conforming to traditions and the principles of probity and propriety, as well as balancing the twin purposes of future welfare and immediate concerns. (3)

The members of the assembly were bewildered and dumbfounded, not knowing what to say in reply.

Seeing their predicament, Bharat decided to intervene; bowing his head and joining the palms of his hands, he spoke politely (as follows). (4)

भानुबंस भए भूप घनेरे । अधिक एक तें एक बड़ेरे ॥ ५ ॥

जनम हेतु सब कहँ पितु माता । करम सुज्ञासुभ देइ बिधाता ॥ ६ ॥

bhānubansa bha'ē bhūpa ghanērē. adhika ēka tēm ēka baṛērē. 5.
janama hētu saba kaham' pitu mātā. karama subhāsubha dē'i bidhātā. 6.

Bharat addressed the assembly in general and sage Vasistha in particular: 'There have been many noble and great kings and princes, one greater than the other, in the illustrious ancient family that belongs to the Solar Race (i.e. the royal family of the kingdom of Ayodhya to which Lord Ram and his three brothers belonged). (5)

All those who are born in this mortal, gross world are given births by their respective parents, and then it is the Creator (*bidhātā*) who judges each one of them in accordance with the deeds done by that individual to decide what kind of fruit that person deserves, should the person be rewarded for leading an auspicious life marked by goodness and nobility, or be punished for being evil and wicked during his tenure in this world¹. (6)

[Note—¹There is a great message of profound importance that is to be taken note of here. It is this: Though a person has no control over his birth, but he certainly has control over his destiny. He cannot decide about his birth, but definitely he can decide what he will make of his life, over how he would lead his life, over what he would do

and avoid, over the aim of life that the individual fixes for himself, and then how to achieve that aim. It is therefore no use of blaming one's parents or birth for the misfortunes that one faces later on in life because of one's own misdeeds, wicked actions and wrong decisions.]

दलि दुख सजइ सकल कल्याणा । अस असीस राउरि जगु जाना ॥ ७ ॥

सो गोसाइँ बिधि गति जेहिं छेंकी । सकइ को टारि टेक जो टेकी ॥ ८ ॥

dali dukha saja'i sakala kalyānā. asa asīsa rā'uri jagu jānā. 7.

sō gōsā'im' bidhi gati jēhim chēnkī. saka'i kō ṭāri ṭēka jō ṭēkī. 8.

[Turning to sage Vasistha, Bharat praised him and said—] Oh Lord, thy blessings and benedictions have such stupendous powers that, if thou so wish, all misfortunes that surround an individual can be eliminated, and instead, one can enjoy auspiciousness and all-round welfare.

The whole world knows these special mystical abilities of thy majesty's blessings (rā'uri jagu jānā). (7)

Oh exalted Lord (gōsā'im')! Thou hast in the past thwarted even the will of the Creator and the provisions of Providence by successfully defying them¹.

Verily indeed and in all sooth, who can go against thine wishes; who can defy thee; who can challenge what thou dictate? [To wit, no one can ever succeed in going against what sage Vasistha wants.] (8)

[Note—¹Sage Vasistha: Sage Vasistha is one of the well known ancient sages and mentioned even in the Rig Veda (refer Rig Veda, 7/33/14). He is one of the great celestial sages known as Sapta Rishis—or the seven great sages. According to another version, he was born in a Kumbh or a pitcher as a son of the Varuna God (the Water God). Another great sage named Agastya was his twin brother.

Vasistha is credited with one of the greatest treatises on Vedanta, called Yog Vasistha. It is also called Maha Ramayan.

Arundhati, also known as Akshamala and Urjaa, was the most erudite, sagacious and wise wife of sage Vasistha. She was the daughter of Prajapati Kardama and his wife Devahuti. Sage Atri's wife Anusuiya was her sister, and sage Kapil was her brother. Her famous son was sage Shakti. She was a preacher and a well known scholar of the scriptures in her own right, and was no less enlightened than her husband Vasistha.

His son was sage Shakti. Sage Parashar was his grandson, and sage Veda Vyas, who is the legendary classifier of the Vedas and the author of the Purans, was his great grandson.

The celebrated sage Kapil, who is said to be the proponent of the great school of Hindu philosophy known as Shankya Shastra, was the brother-in-law of sage Vasistha, being the brother of his wife Arundhati, and the only son of sage Kardama and his wife Devahuti. He taught even his mother spiritual wisdom in Bhagavata, and hence this part of this scripture is called 'Kapil Gita' in which the sage has expounded upon the philosophies of Sankhya Shastra, Ashtanga Yoga (the eight-fold path of Yoga) and Bhakti-yoga (the path of devotion for and submission to the Lord) (3/25-33).

There are a number of legends associated with Vasistha. One such tale narrates how his all-wish fulfilling cow named Nandini was attempted to be stolen by king Vishvarath, the son of Gaadhi. The attempt failed miserably. This king was so determined and in awe of Vasistha's mystical powers that had prevented him from acquiring this cow that he did severe Tapa (austerity and penance) to acquire similar powers. Thus, he became sage a great sage known as Vishwamitra.

The Sharva Upanishad of Atharva Veda, in its verse no. 22 stresses the greatness of Lord Shiva known as Maheshwar by saying that even such great sage as Vasistha had praised and prayed to the Lord, implying that if Vasistha had worshipped Shiva then the latter must surely be a great Lord.

There are a number of instances which prove that sage Vasistha's will prevails even against the will of providence and fate.

(i) Vaivaswat, the seventh Manu, had no son. Sage Vasistha advised him to perform a fire sacrifice dedicated to the God known as 'Mitraavarun'. Manu's wife, named Shraddha, went to the chief priest presiding over the rituals and expressed her wish to have a daughter. In accordance to Shraddha's wish, the chief priest offered oblations to the sacred fire with that objective, and as a result she was blessed by a daughter named Ilaa. Manu was not pleased as he wanted to have a son; so he asked sage Vasistha how and why the things went wrong, and instead of a son his wife begot a daughter. Vasistha closed his eyes and meditated; he came to know what had actually transpired during the fire sacrifice as narrated herein above.

The sage, however, promised Manu that he would invoke his special mystical powers to fulfill the wish of his patron. Hence, Vasistha meditated and successfully pleased the Supreme Being, known as the 'Adi-Purush' or the Viraat Purush, and got a boon from the Lord that Manu's daughter would transform into a son. So, Ilaa got changed to a son who was named 'Sudyumna'.

One day, while on a hunting expedition Sudyumna entered a private forest of Lord Shiva in the foothills of Mt. Kailash. This forest was used by Lord Shiva and his consort Parvati to roam around, and to protect it from outsiders and prying eyes, the Lord had cast a spell on it that anyone who enters it without permission would be transmewed into a female. So therefore, Sudyumna and his companions became females.

Meanwhile, Buddha, the son of the Moon God, was doing penance in a nearby forest. When he saw the female form of Sudyumna, Buddha was infatuated by her beauty, and so was Sudyumna by Buddha's handsome form. The result was that they started living together. Sudyumna, however, remembered his past, and regretted the subsequent developments that had trapped him into a female body.

He prayed to sage Vasistha who visited him. The sage was appalled at his condition and felt pity for him. The sage then prayed to Lord Shiva to bless Sudyumna so that his curse can be dispelled. Shiva told him that it is not possible to completely reverse the process, yet he would bless Sudyumna so that he would live as a male for one month to look after the work of his kingdom, and a female for one month (to live as Buddha's consort), and this cycle would continue. {This story is narrated in Srimad Bhagwad Mahapurana, Skandha 9, Chapter 1.}

(ii) King Dasrath had no son. Sage Vasistha blessed him so that the king got four sons (Lord Ram, Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan) when he was about sixty thousand years old! {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 189.}

(iii) Vasistha was the mind-born son of the creator Brahma. When Brahma asked his son to become a priest in the illustrious family of the Solar Race because

one day the Supreme Being would be born in it as Lord Ram, and then Visistha would be immensely blessed to be able to serve the Lord and enjoy his company from close quarters, Vasistha was very reluctant to accept his father's advice in the beginning, but he later on agreed because it would give him the rare privilege to serve Lord Ram. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 48—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 50.}

Nevertheless, Vasistha was in a quandary—because this conversation took place in 'Sata Yug', the first quarter of the four-quarter cycle of creation and destruction, while Lord Ram was supposed to be born in 'Treta Yuga', meaning the 'third quarter of this four-quarter cycle'. That era was very far away in the distant future, and sage Vasistha lost patience to wait for so long.

So, employing his supernatural powers, sage Vasistha managed to reverse the sequence of Yugas by making 'Treta Yuga' immediately follow 'Sata Yuga', instead of allowing the Yugas to follow their natural cycle of first having Sata Yuga (the 1st era), followed by Dwapar Yuga* (2nd era), Treta Yuga (3rd era), and lastly the Kali Yuga (the 4th and the current era). {"Dwapar Yuga" literally means the 'second era of the four-era cycle of creation and destruction'.}

(iv) Sage Vishwamitra (whose fire sacrifice Lord Ram and Laxman had protected, and was instrumental in the Lord's marriage with Sita) had done severe penance and austerities with the objective of being declared a 'Brahma-rishi', i.e. a sage who has acquired a spiritual state that makes him as exalted as Brahm, the Supreme Being himself. Pleased by his penance and austerities, Brahma declared him to be a 'Brahma-rishi', but Vishwamitra was not satisfied, for he asserted that unless sage Vasistha declares him to be a 'Brahma-rishi', he won't relent. This episode implies that sage Vishwamitra assigned a greater importance to sage Vasistha to endorse his spiritual achievements than to what even the creator Brahma had declared. It is not authoritatively established, however, if sage Vasistha had actually declared sage Vishwamitra as a 'Brahma-rishi', because the former insisted that unless Vishwamitra completely overcomes his ego he is not entitled to be elevated to the stature of a Brahma-rishi, and it is not clear whether it actually materialized.

There is an interesting story of sage Vishwamitra and sage Vasistha being in conflict with each other as follows:

Once Vishwamitra gathered a huge army and went to the forest to hunt. There, he stayed in the hermitage of sage Vasistha who had a magical cow known as 'Kamdhenu' which had the mystical power to give anything one wishes. Vasistha fed the entire army and made arrangements for their comfort on the strength of this cow. Vishwamitra eyed the cow because he thought that she was more useful for a king than a hermit or a sage. When Vasistha refused to give her, Vishwamitra tried force, but was utterly defeated. All his sons were killed except one. Vishwamitra handed over the charge of the kingdom to him and went to do Tapa to acquire powers so that he can get the Kamdhenu from Vasistha. As a result of the Tapa he acquired great weapons from Lord Shiva, but again failed to snatch the Kamdhenu from Vasistha. Ashamed, he did severe Tapa once again to attain the exalted stature of a Brahma-rishi, a stature that Vasistha already possessed. To wreck vengeance upon Vasistha, he had cursed the latter's sons and reduced them to ashes. Later on, however, the two sages became friends when one day Vasistha heard that Vishwamitra has great respect for his Brahmin-hood and spiritual powers.

The story of sage Vishwamitra is narrated by sage Satanand to Lord Ram in the famous epic "Valmiki Ramayan", in its Baal Kand, Canto 51, verse no. 17—to Canto 65, verse no. 29. Many interesting stories related to him are narrated here, and

one such story is that he had created a heaven for his patron king Trishanku, and his conflict with sage Vasistha and his ultimate elevation to the status of a Brahma-rishi, i.e. a sage who has acquired the highest stature which makes him equivalent to the stature of Brahm, the Supreme Being.

(v) During the wedding ceremony of king Dilip and queen Sudakshina, the ends of their bridal costumes were tied in a strong knot. When sage Vasistha enquired why that was done, he was told that if this knot got untied, the couple would die. So, the sage employed his mystical powers to override this destiny, meaning that even if the knot got untied, the king and the queen won't die.]

दो०. बूझिअ मोहि उपाउ अब सो सब मोर अभागु।

सुनि सनेहमय बचन गुर उर उमगा अनुरागु ॥ २५५ ॥

dōhā.

būjhi'a mōhi upā'u aba sō saba mōra abhāgu.

sunī sanēhamaya bacana gura ura umagā anurāgu. 255.

[Bharat faced sage Vasistha and said—] ‘Oh Lord, it is such an irony that though you are all-knowing and possess such stupendous mystical powers as being able to change the course of destiny if you so desire, you still ask us to give you advice as to what course of action should be adopted by us!’¹

Hearing these words of Bharat, which though seemingly were sarcastic but nevertheless were soaked in affection for the sage and indicated how frustrated Bharat felt, the wise sage was impressed by his frankness and the purity of the virtue of love and affection that he had (because this had made Bharat fearless in speaking so boldly before the sage, who was not merely a priest of the kingdom but his guru, a moral preceptor and spiritual guide, as well, and therefore it was quite odd for Bharat to speak so courageously before such a senior person as sage Vasistha, and even question the sage's wisdom in seeking opinion of others when he himself was competent to take decisions)². (Doha no. 255)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 254.

²Sage Vasistha did not take offense at all by Bharat's sarcastic remarks. The sage knew that Bharat had great respect for him as is clear from what he had just said (apropos: Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede this Doha). Further, when a person is under immense mental and emotional stress, his behaviour becomes odd and unconventional, and should not be paid much attention to, for he is unable to think coherently and act decently. If such persons happen to commit some impertinence, then they should be forgiven by those who are saintly, wise and intelligent, for they realize that an emotionally upset person has no control over his mind, and his acts are often impulsive and driven by grief rather than by rational thinking. This principle has been clearly stated in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 97; (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 177; and (iii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 258 where this situation is highlighted.

So therefore, the wise sage remained calm and he treated Bharat with a lot of sympathy and understanding as will be evident in the sage's response in the following verses.]

चौ०. तात बात फुरि राम कृपाहीं । राम बिमुख सिधि सपनेहुँ नाहीं ॥ १ ॥
 सकुचउँ तात कहत एक बाता । अरथ तजहिँ बुध सरबस जाता ॥ २ ॥
 caupāī.

tāta bāta phuri rāma kṛpāhīm. rāma bimukha sidhi sapanēhumṁ nāhīm. 1.
 sakuca'umṁ tāta kahata ēka bātā. aradha tajahim budha sarabasa jātā. 2.

Sage Vasistha replied to Bharat with a lot of affection, sympathy and understanding: 'My dear son (tāta)! What you have said is indeed true, for whatever happens is in accordance with Lord Ram's wishes; everything is to be regarded as a result of his grace.

Verily indeed and without gainsay, there is nothing to be gained by opposing Lord Ram and defying his wishes, for it leads to nowhere. (1)

However, my dear son (tāta), I must say that there is an old adage that one should be wise enough to accept whatever is available, even a half of what one would normally expect to have, in cases where being adamant on certain issues may result in losing the whole thing.

[To wit, when the situation is so precarious that one faces the prospect of losing entirely if one is not ready for making some sort of compromise, the best option wils be to accept whatever gain comes one's way instead of being stubborn to get the whole thing and losing it entirely.]¹ (2)

[Note—¹It is another important message that we must remember in our own lives and gain from it by applying it in practice in our day-to-day dealings in the world.

Though it is not bad to aim high and great, to make efforts to achieve full success in any endeavour, but in case this is not possible due to any reason whatsoever, then the best course of action would be to accept whatever is available, instead of fretting and fuming for that which can't be had.]

तुम्ह कानन गवनहु दोउ भाई । फेरिअहिँ लखन सीय रघुराई ॥ ३ ॥
 सुनि सुबचन हरषे दोउ भ्राता । भे प्रमोद परिपूरन गाता ॥ ४ ॥

tumha kānana gavanahu dō'u bhāī. phēri'ahim lakhana siya raghurāī. 3.
 suni subacana haraṣē dō'u bhrātā. bhē pramōda paripūrana gātā. 4.

Sage Vasistha continued: 'I would suggest that you two brothers (i.e. Bharat and Shatrughan) proceed to the forest in place of Lord Ram and Laxman, and let them return home (to Ayodhya).¹ (3)

Hearing this proposal of the sage, the two brothers (i.e. Bharat and Shatrughan) felt jubilant; they warmly welcomed the sage's advice even as they were thrilled and excited to give effect to it². (4)

[Note—¹The sage threw this teaser to put Bharat through a tough test. The sage wanted to judge the depth and sincerity of Bharat's love and devotion for Lord Ram, as well as to test his integrity and truthfulness about whatever he has said till now with reference to his wishes to take Lord Ram back to Ayodhya and anoint him on the throne. Is Bharat ready to sacrifice his own conveniences and comforts so that Lord Ram is freed from the inconveniences and discomforts that he faces in the wilds; is Bharat ready to suffer the hardships and troubles of forest life so that Lord Ram is freed from them? Or, is that whatever Bharat had been saying till now just a ruse to free himself from the burden of infamy and scorn that he has been subjected to for being the cause of the calamity that had befallen on the family and the kingdom?

²Bharat's response was extremely positive as he welcomed the sage's advice. This endeared him not only to the sage but also to everyone else present in the conference, and it permanently sealed their respect for him for all times to come.

As we shall be reading in due course of time, Bharat took this advice of sage Vasistha very seriously. During the public conference that was held later on, Bharat would propose to Lord Ram that he would willingly like to go to the forest with his younger brother Shatrughan so that the Lord and Laxman could return home, as advised by the sage—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 268—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 269.

But as it transpired, Bharat had to bow to Lord Ram's wish— which of course was the correct thing for him to do, and was also in accordance with the sage's advice as stated in verse no. 1 herein above— and return to Ayodhya with the Lord's wooden sandals as token presence of the Lord. Back home, Bharat had installed those wooden sandals on the throne of the kingdom as a symbolic representation of Lord Ram sitting on it as the King, and he himself went to live a self-imposed life of a reclusive hermit in the suburbs of the city for the entire period of fourteen years till the Lord returned home. During this period, Bharat led a life exactly as an ascetic would do in the forest, doing penance and observing strict austerities. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 324—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 326.}]

मन प्रसन्न तन तेजु बिराजा । जनु जिय राउ रामु भए राजा ॥ ५ ॥

बहुत लाभ लोगन्ह लघु हानी । सम दुख सुख सब रोवहि रानी ॥ ६ ॥

mana prasanna tana tēju birājā. janu jiya rā'u rāmu bha'e rājā. 5.

bahuta lābha lōganha laghu hānī. sama dukha sukha saba rōvahiṁ rānī. 6.

Bharat's Mana (heart and mind) was very glad to hear this proposal of sage Vasistha; his body bristled with excitement and energy as if Lord Ram has already become a king. (5)

Bharat quickly weighed the pros and cons in his mind and came to the conclusion that it was the best option that was available—for it provided great benefits with minimal loss or harm. The citizens would have a lot to gain and very little to worry about or lose¹.

It would not make any difference to the queens (i.e. the mothers) either as they would be subjected to a similar type of sorrows and happiness that they have at present². (6)

[Note—¹The citizens had special affection for Lord Ram and they loved him a lot as is evident in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 198.

It is also evident when Lord Ram was proceeding to the forest. As the Lord exited the city, virtually the whole population ran after him, weeping, wailing and grieving, declaring that they can't live without him, and wherever Lord Ram stays they will stay with him—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 83—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 84.

Hence, if Lord Ram returns to Ayodhya as sage Vasistha advised, it would give immense cheer to the citizens and would fulfill their wishes. Bharat proceeding to the forest in the stead of Lord Ram would be not of much consequence to the citizens.

²This is because the mothers, here specially referring to Kaushalya and Sumitra, the mothers of Lord Ram and Laxman respectively, treated all the four brothers alike. For them, there was no difference between Bharat and Lord Ram, or between Laxman and Shatrughan.

Therefore, their grief would remain the same whoever out of the four brothers goes to the forest, and similarly their consolation at having two of them living in Ayodhya would not be affected by who those two are.

In fact, as far as Sumitra was concerned, it was the same thing whether Laxman stayed with her or Shatrughan, because both were her sons. Her happiness at Laxman being with her will be the same as Shatrughan staying with her; and at the same time her sadness at Shatrughan going to the forest would be similar to her grief at Laxman going away.

As far as Kaushalya was concerned, we have already read how she loved Bharat and treated him with the same affection as she would have treated her own son Lord Ram—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 163—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 169.

Further, when the royal court was held and sage Vasistha tried to persuade Bharat to accept the crown, Kaushalya had unequivocally endorsed the sage's proposal to make Bharat the king of Ayodhya in the absence of Lord Ram, Kaushalya's son—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 176.

This proves that Kaushalya saw no difference between Lord Ram and Bharat.

As for Kaikeyi, she was in a dire strait. Her son Bharat had not only sternly rebuked her*1 but had even vowed not to see her face and talk with her as long as he lived*2, so whether he goes to the forest or stays at home was the same thing for her.

{Refer: *1= Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 161—to Doha no. 162; and *2 = Geetawali Ramayan, Uttar Kand, verse no. 37.}]

कहहिं भरतु मुनि कहा सो कीन्हे । फलु जग जीवन्ह अभिमत दीन्हे ॥ ७ ॥

कानन करउँ जनम भरि बासू । एहिं तें अधिक न मोर सुपासू ॥ ८ ॥

kahahim̐ bharatu muni kahā sō kīnhē. phalu jaga jīvanha abhimata dīnhē. 7.
kānana kara'um̐ janama bhari bāsū. ēhim̐ tēm̐ adhika na mōra supāsū. 8.

Bharat declared in an unequivocal term: ‘What the exalted sage has proposed is the best thing to do, as it would fulfill the wishes of all the people in this world (with special reference to the subjects of Ayodhya). (7)

As for me, I am ready to volunteer myself to stay in the forest for the rest of my life. I can’t imagine that there would be anything easier or better than this option given by the sage.’ (8)

दो०. अंतरजामी रामु सिय तुम्ह सरबग्य सुजान ।

जौं फुर कहहु त नाथ निज कीजिअ बचनु प्रवान ॥ २५६ ॥

dōhā.

antarajāmī rāmu siya tumha sarabagya sujāna.
jaum̐ phura kahahu ta nātha nija kiji'a bacanu pravāna. 256.

Bharat exhorted sage Vasistha emphatically to implement his plan when he said: ‘Oh Lord. Thou art all-knowing and very wise (tumha sarabagya sujāna). Lord Ram and Sita too are all-knowing and they are aware my inner thoughts (antarajāmī rāmu siya)¹.

Therefore, oh Lord (nātha), if what thou havest proposed and what I havest accepted cheerfully has been done in good faith and with God as witness, then let it be put into effect by thee. It is now upon thee to implement thine own words and see that they bear fruits (for I am ready on my part).² (Doha no. 256)

[Note—¹Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 257 herein below.

²Bharat turned the table on sage Vasistha by throwing the ball back in his court. While sage Vasistha had tried his trick to judge Bharat and make him fall in the clever trap laid by him when he had proposed that Bharat and Shatrughan should go to the forest if they want Lord Ram and Laxman to return home (refer: verse no. 3 that precedes this Doha no. 256), for the sage had thought that this proposal would trip Bharat and put him on the back-foot as it was highly unlikely that he would accept it, but he was wrong.

Bharat gladly accepted it, and his acceptance, though hailed by everyone and evoked universal praise and applause, put sage Vasistha on a sticky wicket nevertheless. Now, it was upto him to implement his own plans; matters were made complicated for the sage because he was bound by his words, and to exacerbate things further for him he was the guru and the chief priest of the kingdom whose advice was accepted by everyone. What will he do now; how will he extricate himself from the snare of his own creation? To wit, he was caught in his own pincers. First he had tried to trap Bharat and catch him in a denial mode, but it backfired on the sage himself, for now he himself would have to go back on his words because he knew that Lord Ram will never return to Ayodhya!

The lesson we learn from this episode is this: “Never try to tease and test Lord Ram’s true devotee, for it will certainly backfire.”

There are specific instances in Ram Charit Manas where this principle is unequivocally stressed—apropos: (a) Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 218 (as said by sage Brishhaspati, the guru of the gods); (ii) Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 295 (as reiterated by goddess Saraswati); and (b) Uttar Kand, (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 113 (as affirmed by the saintly crow Kaagbhusund).]

चौ०. भरत बचन सुनि देखि सनेहू । सभा सहित मुनि भए बिदेहू ॥ १ ॥
 भरत महा महिमा जलरासी । मुनि मति ठाढ़ि तीर अबला सी ॥ २ ॥
 गा चह पार जतनु हियँ हेरा । पावति नाव न बोहितु बेरा ॥ ३ ॥
 caupāī.

bharata bacana suni dēkhi sanēhū. sabhā sahita muni bha'e bidēhū. 1.
 bharata mahā mahimā jalarāsī. muni mati ṭhāḍhi tīra abalā sī. 2.
 gā caha pāra jatanu hiyam' hērā. pāvati nāva na bōhitu bērā. 3.

Hearing the affectionate words of Bharat, and perceiving the depth and immensity of his love (as well as devotion) for Lord Ram, the sage (Vasistha), along with all others present at the conference, were spell-bound; they were so exceedingly happy and thrilled that for a moment they forgot about everything, including the awareness of their own bodies¹. (1)

Verily indeed, Bharat’s glories and virtues were like a vast and fathomless ocean, whilst the wit and wisdom of sage Vasistha resembled a helpless woman who was standing on the shore of that ocean [2],--- trying to find a way to cross over it, but how hard she tried she could not find any means, such as a boat or ship, to get across [3]². (2-3)

[Note—¹To wit, observing how pious Bharat was, and how clean his heart and pure his mind were, everyone present on the occasion was transported to a higher level of consciousness that transcended this mortal existence. They were ecstatic with joy and wondered why they themselves could not achieve the level of devotion and love that Bharat had for Lord Ram.

²Sage Vasistha had tried many tricks to fathom Bharat’s devotion and love for Lord Ram, to judge his truthfulness, sincerity and integrity, to test his sense of piety, nobility, probity and propriety, but Bharat succeeded in outsmarting the sage. At last, sage Vasistha had to acknowledge that Bharat’s virtues and glories were peerless; no one can match Bharat in the field of these qualities and virtues that he embodies.

Earlier we have already read that the deity of Prayag*1, as well as the exalted sage Bharadwaj*2 have hailed Bharat and declared him as a very pious and saintly person who is loved by Lord Ram as much as he loves the Lord.

{*1 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 205.

*2 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 207—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 210.}

But in this connection, one thing is to be remarked here. Even sage Bharadwaj had tried to see how truthful Bharat was when he declared that he has no interest in acquiring the crown and its associated comforts and pleasures, and that his only concern was to serve Lord Ram with humbleness as he is not interested in enjoying material comforts of this world at the cost of inflicting inconveniences on the Lord—by creating a magical camp that had all material comforts and pleasures one can imagine of for Bharat’s stay at his hermitage. But the sage was astonished to see that Bharat was not at all influenced by them, but he had spent the night very uncomfortably as if lying in a trap and eager to break free from it, for as soon as the day dawned the next morning, he got up to move swiftly onwards to Chitrakoot to meet Lord Ram, without a moment’s delay. This development left sage Bharadwaj in awe of Bharat*, almost like sage Vasistha is at present. {*Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 213—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 216.}}

औरु करिहि को भरत बड़ाई । सरसी सीपि कि सिंधु समाई ॥ ४ ॥
भरतु मुनिहि मन भीतर भाए । सहित समाज राम पहिं आए ॥ ५ ॥

auru karihi kō bharata barā'ī. sarasī sīpi ki sindhu samā'ī. 4.
bharatu munihi mana bhītara bhā'ē. sahita samāja rāma pahim ā'ē. 5.

What more can be said in honour and praise of Bharat than to say that to try to fathom his love and devotion for Lord Ram, as well as to measure his stellar qualities of piety, saintliness and integrity is like trying to collect the vast ocean in the small hollow of a shell of a snail that lives in a shallow pool of water.

[To wit, just as it is impossible to collect the ocean in a small snail’s shell, or in a small puddle or a pool, so it is also impossible to fathom or measure Bharat’s glories and stellar qualities by applying the limited resources of one’s mind and intellect.]¹ (4)

Bharat won the heart and mind of sage Vasistha; he was liked by the sage immensely.

After this private conference, the sage and Bharat, along with the whole company, came to where Lord Ram was². (5)

[Note—¹In this context, refer to Goswami Tulsidas’ book “Geetawali Ramayan”, Lanka Kand, verse no. 11, stanza nos. 4-5.

²We have read in verse no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 253 herein above that sage Vasistha had summoned Bharat as he was paying his respects to Lord Ram in the morning and was preparing to sit down near him. Lord Ram understood that the sage wished to have some private discussion with Bharat, and so the Lord waited patiently for all of them to come to him to see what course of action can be taken, and how the vexed issue can be resolved to the satisfaction of all.]

प्रभु प्रनामु करि दीन्ह सुआसनु । बैठे सब सुनि मुनि अनुसासनु ॥ ६ ॥
बोले मुनिबरु बचन बिचारी । देस काल अवसर अनुहारी ॥ ७ ॥

सुनहु राम सरबग्य सुजाना । धरम नीति गुन ग्यान निधाना ॥ ८ ॥

prabhu pranāmu kari dīnha su'āsanu. baiṭhē saba suni muni anusāsanu. 6.
bōlē munibaru bacana bicārī. dēsa kāla avasara anuhārī. 7.
sunahu rāma sarabagya sujānā. dharama nīti guna gyāna nidhānā. 8.

Everyone bowed their heads before Lord Ram to pay their obeisance to the Lord, and then they sat down when instructed by sage Vasistha. (6)

The wise sage spoke words after taking into consideration all the aspects of the current situation, its gravity and implications, both for short term as well as for the future. (7)

Sage Vasistha began to speak: 'Listen oh Lord Ram; thou art wise, all-knowing, good natured and gentlemanly.

Indeed, thou art an upholder of the virtues and principles of Dharma (right conduct and thought; probity and propriety; auspiciousness and righteousness) and Niti (rules and laws as mandated by the scriptures as well as tradition and culture); thou art an embodiment of all the Gunas (all the best of qualities and virtues) and Gyan (knowledge; wisdom; gnosis).¹ (8)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 9-10 that precede Doha no. 28; (ii) Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 51; (b) Ayodhya Kand, (iii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 41; (iv) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 77; (v) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 127; (vi) Doha no. 256; (vii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 304; (viii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 305.]

दो०. सब के उर अंतर बसहु जानहु भाउ कुभाउ ।

पुरजन जननी भरत हित होइ सो कहिअ उपाउ ॥ २५७ ॥

dōhā.

saba kē ura antara basahu jānahu bhā'u kubhā'u.
purajana janani bharata hita hō'i sō kahi'a upā'u. 257.

Sage Vasistha continued: 'You live in the subtle heart of all living beings (as their Atma, their soul and true self that is pure consciousness), and by virtue of this you know the inner feelings and thoughts of everyone¹.

Now, you should do whatever is for the good and welfare of the citizens, your mothers, Bharat and others². (Doha no. 257)

[Note—¹Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 256 herein above.

²A similar situation if observed in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 10. Here the sage was sent by king Dasrath to inform Lord Ram about his decision to anoint him on the throne of Ayodhya. While interacting with the Lord, sage Vasistha was circumvent in his advice to him; after

informing Lord Ram that the king has initiated preparations to crown him, the sage skirted the main issue by not emphatically telling the Lord to get ready to accept the crown, but telling him instead to ponder over the matter seriously and do what he thinks fit and proper under the circumstances. That clearly hinted to Lord Ram that sage Vasistha has his reservations in the matter of his immediate ascension to the throne.

We discover that the sage adopted the same strategy now too. He presently tells Lord Ram to do what he thinks if for the good and welfare of others, instead of being emphatic and telling the Lord that everyone wants him to go back to Ayodhya, and that Bharat has offered himself to replace Lord Ram in case it is obligatory for someone to stay in the forest in deference to king Dasrath's words.

To wit, by being circumvent and deflecting the matter cleverly, sage Vasistha once again hinted to Lord Ram that he was not in favour of the idea of his immediate return. Why? Because being 'all-knowing and wise', sage Vasistha was aware of the mission of Lord Ram, which was to eliminate the demons, and this could only be achieved if the Lord goes into the deeper parts of the forest and beyond to Lanka where the demons are to be mainly found. And the sage did not want to create a hurdle in this mission.]

चौ०. आरत कहहिं बिचारि न काऊ । सूझ जुआरिहि आपन दाऊ ॥ १ ॥

सुनि मुनि बचन कहत रघुराऊ । नाथ तुम्हारेहि हाथ उपाऊ ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

ārata kahahim bicāri na kā'ū. sūjha ju'ārihi āpana dā'ū. 1.

suni muni bacana kahata raghurā'ū. nātha tumhārēhi hātha upā'ū. 2.

[Sage Vasistha warned Lord Ram to be alert and careful while deciding on the plea of Bharat and others to return home when he told the Lord—] 'Those who are distressed and emotionally upset tend to speak without paying due thought to the gravity of the situation and the long-term import of what they say¹. It is like the case of a gambler who only thinks of his own moves and how to win a game, irrespective of how he manages to do it.

[To wit, just like a gambler has only one thing in mind, and it is to somehow win the game at any cost, so is also the case with emotionally disturbed people who would like to have things done in the way that suits them, rather than based on merit.]' (1)

Upon hearing sage Vasistha's advice, Lord Ram replied: 'Oh Sage, the solution of the vexed problem lies in your hands.

["Oh sage", said Lord Ram, "thou art wise, intelligent and learned enough to suggest to us some way so that both the objectives can be achieved—viz. Bharat's wish could be fulfilled, as well as my mission to remove the scourge of the evil demons too can be accomplished successfully. You see, from the practical point of view, both objectives can't be fulfilled simultaneously. Either it's what Bharat wants, i.e. I must return home and accept the crown of the kingdom, or I proceed to the forest to successfully confront and eliminate the demons directly. So therefore, since thou art our guru and the senior-most advisor of the family and the kingdom, tell me then, how doth thou plan to implement these two diametrically opposite objectives."]² (2)

[Note—¹Refer to the note appended to Doha no. 257 herein above. Sage Vasistha warned Lord Ram not to be unduly moved by emotions and get distracted from his objective of coming down to earth from the heaven—which was to eliminate the demons. If the Lord bows to Bharat's wishes and returns home, the entire plan to get rid of the cruel demons would crumble.

The idea that when a person is under immense emotional stress, his mind does not work properly, and his words and actions are driven more by his emotions rather than by rational thoughts, has been reiterated elsewhere in Ram Charit Manas also. For instance, refer to: Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 177; (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 300.]

²Like Bharat in the earlier case, Lord Ram puts the ball back in sage Vasistha's court, telling the sage to advise him what to do so that Bharat's wishes are honoured while the mission of eliminating the demons, which the Lord had promised gods, mother earth and the sages a long time ago, and for which it was necessary to proceed to the forest instead of returning back to Ayodhya, could also be accomplished. How does the sage plan to bring about a synergy between these two opposite goals.

Once again, sage Vasistha was left wondering what to do, for he could not deny that being the chief priest and advisor of the kingdom he had a great responsibility in his hands, that he had moral obligations to fulfill, and he simply cannot say that he would prefer to step aside and wash his hands off everything.]

सब कर हित रुख राउरि राखें । आयसु किऐँ मुदित फुर भाषें ॥ ३ ॥
 प्रथम जो आयसु मो कहूँ होई । माथें मानि करौँ सिख सोई ॥ ४ ॥
 पुनि जेहि कहँ जस कहब गोसाईँ । सो सब भाँति घटिहि सेवकाईँ ॥ ५ ॥

saba kara hita rukha rā'uri rākhēm. āyasu ki'ēm' mudita phura bhāṣēm. 3.
 prathama jō āyasu mō kahum' hō'ī. māthēm māni karaum' sikha sō'ī. 4.
 puni jēhi kaham' jasa kahaba gōsā'īm. sō saba bhām'ti ghaṭihi sēvakā'īm. 5.

Everyone's welfare can be taken care of, and at the same time the wishes of the king (Dasrath) could also be honoured—please tell me how it can be done, and all of us would be too glad to obey thy commands*.

[*There is however another way to interpret and read this verse as follows: “Everyone's welfare lies in honouring thy (sage Vasistha's) wishes. So please order us what is to be done, and all of us would gladly comply with thine orders.”] (3)

Whatever you order me to do, I shall bow my head and do it at first instance (i.e. I shalt carry out thine orders without questioning). (4)

Then oh revered Lord (gōsā'īm), whatever thee tell others to do, all of them will obey thy commands forthwith and eagerly serve thee.' (5)

कह मुनि राम सत्य तुम्ह भाषा । भरत सनेहँ बिचारु न राखा ॥ ६ ॥

तेहि तें कहउँ बहोरि बहोरी । भरत भगति बस भइ मति मोरी ॥ ७ ॥
मोरें जान भरत रुचि राखी । जो कीजिअ सो सुभ सिव साखी ॥ ८ ॥

kaha muni rāma satya tumha bhāṣā. bharata sanēham̐ bicāru na rākhā. 6.
tēhi tēm kaha'um̐ bahōri bahōrī. bharata bhagati basa bha'i mati mōrī. 7.
mōrēm̐ jāna bharata ruci rākhī. jō kīji'a sō subha siva sākhī. 8.

Sage Vasistha replied to Lord Ram: 'Ram, whatever you have said is true, but you have not considered Bharat's affection and love for you.

[To wit, you have not taken into consideration what repercussion it would have on Bharat should it be decided that it would be far better for you to proceed to the forest in deference to king Dasrath's orders that you live in the forest for fourteen years. Don't you realize that Bharat has such profound love for you and is so faithfully devoted to you that he had openly defied the same king's orders which you want to honour, that he must take charge of the kingdom in your absence. See, Bharat had no compunctions or regret to disobey his father because he loves you so intensely and deeply. How can you neglect this aspect? Say, when Bharat learns that you have preferred to bluntly disregard his request to return home inspite of his intense love and devotion for you, tell me how will he feel; tell me what the world would say; tell me if your heart agrees to it?]¹ (6)

I say repeatedly and emphatically that Bharat's virtue of devotion has left me spell-bound, and my mind is so mesmerized by it that I cannot fathom the depth of his love and devotion for you. (7)

Well, since you ask me I would say that we ought to take into consideration the wishes of Bharat, and whatever we do in this regard, I say in the name of Lord Shiva, would be auspicious.² (8)

[Note—¹Sage Vasistha was by now extremely impressed by Bharat, and so he decided to become his advocate in front of Lord Ram. When the sage quietly observed the sad and despondent face of Bharat while Lord Ram and he were conversing, he was filled with pity for Bharat, and decided that he must intervene on his behalf.

²Sage Vasistha has unequivocally endorsed Bharat's glories. In this connection, let us not forget how another great sage Bharadwaj too has done the same thing in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 297—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 210.]

दो०. भरत बिनय सादर सुनिअ करिअ बिचारु बहोरि ।
करब साधुमत लोकमत नृपनय निगम निचोरि ॥ २५८ ॥
dōhā.

bharata binaya sādara suni'a kari'a bicāru bahōri.
karaba sādhumata lōkamata nrpanaya nigama nicōri. 258.

[Sage Vasistha continued—] ‘So, it would be in the fitness of things to first listen to what Bharat has to say, and then we shall weigh the pros and cons of the matter and think over it to decide on the course of action, what we ought to do, in accordance with the views of other pious souls so that it conforms to established norms and customs, as well as the rules of polity, probity and propriety as applicable to inheritance and ascension to the throne by the heirs of a dead king, all done in compliance with the rules set by the scriptures in this regard.’¹ (Doha no. 258)

[Note—¹Sage Vasistha is being wise and clever once again here. First he tells Lord Ram to honour Bharat’s wishes as it would be the only auspicious thing to do, and the sage also invokes the name of Lord Shiva to stress that what he says is true (apropos: verse no. 8 that precedes this Doha no. 258 herein above), but now he makes a course correction, so to say, by putting a condition to honouring Bharat’s wish—that after hearing what Bharat wishes to say, they will all sit down to thoroughly examine his proposals from every angle, and take into consideration the views of other seniors, see what the scriptures, traditions and rules that govern administration of kingdoms and inheritance etc. have to say in such matters, before arriving at a final decision.

This means, that it is not obligatory or necessary for Lord Ram to do what Bharat says, but at least he must hear him first so that Bharat gets an opportunity to vent his feelings, and thereby set his mind and heart to rest and peace. After that, when the issue will be thoroughly examined in the presence of Bharat, and then if any other decision is taken, Bharat too would agree with it, because since he would be participating in the discussions, he would be able to see the reasons why a particular course of action has been decided upon. This method would put Bharat at ease.]

चौ०. गुर अनुरागु भरत पर देखी । राम हृदयँ आनंदु बिसेषी ॥ १ ॥

भरतहि धरम धुरंधर जानी । निज सेवक तन मानस बानी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

gura anurāgu bharata para dēkhī. rāma hṛdayam ānandu bisēṣī. 1.
bharatahi dharama dhurandhara jānī. nija sēvaka tana mānasa bānī. 2.

When Lord Ram perceived the extent of affection and trust that their guru (sage Vasistha) had for Bharat, the Lord felt excessively glad in his heart (for he too loved Bharat intensely)¹. (1)

The Lord knew that Bharat was exceptionally well-versed in the laws of Dharma (i.e. rules pertaining to probity, propriety and goodness of thought and conduct) and practiced them diligently.

The Lord also was aware that Bharat was completely devoted to him in his deeds, mind and words². (2)

[Note—¹Lord Ram has also praised Bharat highly, and says that no one in this world is more lucky and honourable than Bharat is, in Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 259 herein below.

²Bharat was well versed in the laws of Dharma, he was an expert in the laws of righteous conduct, probity, propriety, ethics and morality—apropos: Ram Charit

Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 207; (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 304.

Bharat would always act in a way that would please Lord Ram, his mind was always thinking of serving the Lord loyally and faithfully, and whatever Bharat said was in accordance to the Lord's wishes—"nija sēvaka tana mānasa bānī". Bharat would never go against the wishes of Lord Ram, and the Lord reciprocated this sentiment of Bharat by always ensuring that Bharat is happy under all circumstances—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 205; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 260; (iii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 300.

The fact that Bharat was obedient to Lord Ram, and would always do what the Lord wanted, without questioning the Lord or answering back, is clear in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 254 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it; (ii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 266; (iii) Doha no. 269 along with Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes it; (iv) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 298; (v) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 307.

The extent of mutual love and affection that existed between the two brothers has been affirmed by (a) sage Bharadwaj in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 208; and (b) by king Janak in Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 289.]

बोले गुर आयस अनुकूला । बचन मंजु मृदु मंगलमूला ॥ ३ ॥
नाथ सपथ पितु चरन दोहाई । भयउ न भुअन भरत सम भाई ॥ ४ ॥

bōlē gura āyasa anukūlā. bacana manjū mṛdu maṅgalamūlā. 3.
nātha sapatha pitu carana dōhāī. bhaya'u na bhu'ana bharata sama bhāī. 4.

On receiving the permission of his guru (sage Vasistha), Lord Ram spoke words that were truthful, pleasant to hear, and endorsed what the sage had said vis-à-vis Bharat. (3)

Addressing sage Vasistha, Lord Ram said: 'Oh Lord (nātha)! I say on oath in your name as well as by invoking the respect that I have for the august feet of my father (king Dasrath), that there is no one to match Bharat as a brother anywhere in this world.

[To wit, there is no other brother like Bharat in the whole world. The virtues of Bharat and his brotherly qualities are unique and matchless. Bharat is unique and one like no one else is.]¹ (4)

[Note—¹This idea that Bharat is incomparable in this world is reiterated by king Janak in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 288.]

जे गुर पद अंबुज अनुरागी । ते लोकहुँ बेदहुँ बड़भागी ॥ ५ ॥
राउर जा पर अस अनुरागू । को कहि सकइ भरत कर भागू ॥ ६ ॥

jē gura pada ambuja anurāgī. tē lōkahum̐ bēdahum̐ barābhāgī. 5.
rā'ura jā para asa anurāgū. kō kahi saka'i bharata kara bhāgū. 6.

Those who are devoted to, and have affection for, the lotus-like feet of their guru (moral preceptor; spiritual guide; teacher and guide in one's life) are very fortunate indeed, as such persons are invariably praised by the world as well as by the Vedas (scriptures). (5)

And when you yourself, being our guru, have such great affection for Bharat, and are unequivocal in your praise for him, then say who can sufficiently praise Bharat's good luck and glories?

[To wit, no one can measure Bharat's good fortunes and judge how lucky he is because it is a great honour for a person if he is praised by his guru as sage Vasistha has done for him.]¹ (6)

[Note—¹Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 257; (ii) Doha no. 258 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it.

As we move on with our reading of this episode, we shall see that even king Janak (who too had come to Chitrakoot when he heard of the developments) was mightily pleased by Bharat's character and behaviour—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 288—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 289.]

लखि लघु बंधु बुद्धि सकुचाई । करत बदन पर भरत बड़ाई ॥ ७ ॥
भरत कहहि सोई किऐ भलाई । अस कहि राम रहे अरगाई ॥ ८ ॥

lakhi laghu bandhu bud'dhi sakucā'ī. karata badana para bharata barā'ī. 7.
bharatu kahahim̐ sō'i ki'ēm̐ bhalā'ī. asa kahi rāma rahē aragā'ī. 8.

Lord Ram further said: 'I understand that Bharat is my younger brother, so I feel hesitant to praise him so lavishly on his face (as it would make him feel embarrassed). (7)

Hence, I agree with thee that it wouldst be good for us to do whatever Bharat says¹.
Saying this, Lord Ram became silent. (8)

[Note—¹In this context, refer to sage Vasistha's advice to Lord Ram in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 258 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it.

Lord Ram had once again reiterated his willingness to do as Bharat says in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 264 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it.]

दो०. तब मुनि बोले भरत सन सब सँकोचु तजि तात ।
कृपासिंधु प्रिय बंधु सन कहहु हृदय कै बात ॥ २५९ ॥

dōhā.

taba muni bōlē bharata sana saba samkōcu taji tāta.
krpāsindhu priya bandhu sana kahahu hr̥daya kai bāta. 259.

Then, the sage (Vasistha) turned to Bharat and said: ‘My dear (tāta), keep aside all your hesitations (saba samkōcu taji), and freely and frankly tell your dear brother (priya bandhu), who is an ocean of mercy, compassion and grace (krpāsindhu), whatever there is in your heart; speak up and say what is in your mind clearly, without any sort of reservations.’ (Doha no. 259)

चौ०. सुनि मुनि बचन राम रुख पाई । गुरु साहिब अनुकूल अघाई ॥ १ ॥
लखि अपनें सिर सबु छरु भारू । कहि न सकहिं कछु करहिं बिचारू ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

sunī muni bacana rāma rukha pāī. guru sāhiba anukūla aghāī. 1.
lakhi apanēm sira sabu charu bhārū. kahi na sakahim kachu karahim bicārū.
2.

Hearing the words of his guru (sage Vasistha—who has asked Bharat to speak his mind frankly, without holding back anything)¹ and observing the intention of Lord Ram (who has said that it will be good to do whatever Bharat says)², Bharat was very satisfied because he found that both the guru and his master (i.e. Lord Ram) were favourable towards him, hold him in high esteem, and have full trust in him. (1)

This being the case, Bharat discovered that the burden of finding a solution to the vexed issue is now squarely on his own shoulders. This was a great responsibility which made him pensive and speechless for a while³. (2)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 258; and (ii) Doha no. 259.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 259.

³Bharat realised that he has to steer the course of things now onwards, which caused him to become so thoughtful that for a while he could not say anything, unable to decide what to and what not to say. He was in a great predicament, for now he would be held solely responsible for the outcome of the whole enterprise of coming all the way to Chitrakoot.

He wondered what would be the correct thing to do: whether it would be correct thing to insist that Lord Ram return to Ayodhya and accept the crown at this point of time, whether Bharat and Shatrughan should go to the forest in the stead of Lord Ram and Laxman, whether he should return back home and wait out the period of fourteen years for the Lord to return home after fulfilling the commands of his father as well as the promise made by him to the gods, earth and sages that he would personally eliminate the demons by going after them in the remote areas of the dense forests and mountains in the south, and further on to Lanka where the demons lived?

Bharat was in a quandary; earlier he had insisted on a particular course of action because he had thought that he would manage to stay in the background by making sage Vasistha or Lord Ram the ones to take a final call and be held responsible for the outcome, but now he was in the dock himself, for it was upon his own shoulders now to steer the course of discussion and take it into a particular direction, either in a direction favourable to his own personal wishes (which was to take Lord Ram back to Ayodhya and make him accept the kingdom's throne right now), or in a direction that is opposite to his way of thinking but conforms to Lord Ram's wishes (which was to honour Dasrath's orders to stay in the forest for fourteen years before returning home). So therefore, Bharat was dumbfounded and vexed.

In this context, refer also to Tulsidas' book "Geetawali Ramayan", Ayodhya Kand, verse no. 70.]

पुलकि सरीर सभाँ भए ठाढ़े । नीरज नयन नेह जल बाढ़े ॥ ३ ॥
 कहब मोर मुनिनाथ निबाहा । एहि तें अधिक कहाँ मैं काहा ॥ ४ ॥
 मैं जानउँ निज नाथ सुभाऊ । अपराधिहु पर कोह न काऊ ॥ ५ ॥

pulaki sarīra sabhām̐ bha'e ṭhārḥē. nīraja nayana nēha jala bārḥē. 3.
 kahaba mōra muninātha nibāhā. ēhi tēm̐ adhika kahaum̐ mair̐m̐ kāhā. 4.
 mair̐m̐ jāna'um̐ nija nātha subhā'ū. aparādhihu para kōha na kā'ū. 5.

With a thrilled body, Bharat stood up in the assembly to address it, even as tears of affection gushed out of his lotus-like eyes. (3)

Bharat spoke very politely: 'Whatever I had to say has already been said by the revered sage (Vasistha)¹. What more do I have to say about anything? (4)

I know for certain the gracious nature of my Lord—that he never, ever, gets angry on those who may commit any kind of mistake². (5)

[Note—¹What has the sage said that succinctly summarises Bharat's intentions? In this context, refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 257. In this verse, the sage has told Lord Ram that "he must do whatever is for the good of citizens, the mothers, as well as 'Bharat' ".

So, Bharat has deftly put the ball back in Lord Ram's court, telling the Lord in a polite and subtle manner that whatever the Lord decides will be accepted by him in the end.

But, Bharat has to express his wishes as per request of both sage Vasistha and Lord Ram. So therefore, he goes on to express his wish in a very polite manner in the verses that follow— by first reminding Lord Ram the profundity of mutual love that the two brothers had for each other since childhood, how his mother Kaikeyi played spoil-sport and disrupted their brotherly affection by creating a nasty drama which led to the split in the family by compelling Lord Ram to go to the forest and trying to force Bharat to accept the crown in his place, how Bharat was totally innocent in this evil scheme and wished it undone so that the bond of love and affection that existed between him and the Lord could be refreshed and re-affirmed once again. This clearly meant, though indirectly, that the Lord ought to come back to Ayodhya so that he can

assume the charge of their dead father's kingdom, and allow Bharat to be at his side at all times and serve him as his junior.

²Here, Bharat is asking for forgiveness for all the mischief that has been done in his name. And to make sure that Lord Ram will forgive him, he publicly cites the Lord's nature in this regard, which in turn implies that the Lord is obliged to forgive him for the misdeeds done by his mother Kaikeyi in his name.

Thus, with Lord Ram forgiving Bharat, one of latter's objectives would be accomplished.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 3-6 that precede Doha no. 183; (ii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 233—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 234.]

मो पर कृपा सनेहु बिसेषी । खेलत खुनिस न कबहूँ देखी ॥ ६ ॥
सिसुपन तें परिहरेउँ न संगू । कबहूँ न कीन्ह मोर मन भंगू ॥ ७ ॥
मैं प्रभु कृपा रीति जियँ जोही । हारेहुँ खेल जितावहिँ मोही ॥ ८ ॥

mō para kṛpā sanēhu bisēṣī. khēlata khunisa na kabahūṁ dēkhī. 6.
sisupana tēm pariharē'um' na saṅgū. kabahum' na kīnha mōra mana bhaṅgū.
7.

mair' prabhu kṛpā rīti jiyam' jōhī. hārēhum' khēla jitāvahim' mōhī. 8.

[Being assured of forgiveness, Bharat next makes sure that the bond of love and brotherly affection that existed betwixt him and Lord Ram ever since their births has remained intact and robust inspite of the evil fiat of fate that led to the unfortunate developments which tried to drive a wedge between them.]

[Addressing Lord Ram, Bharat continued—] 'You have always had great affection for me, and were so kind and gracious towards me that even during our childhood days I had never seen you finding fault with me when we played any game together, nor had I seen you getting angry at me if I committed any error or broke any of the rules of the game. (6)

Ever since our childhood days, I have never left being by your side, I had always stayed with you.

On your part, you had never done or said anything which would break my heart and make me sad¹. (7)

Oh Lord, I have closely observed your gracious nature that when we used to play games during our childhood days, you would willingly lose a game so that I could win it and feel happy for it. [Obviously it was because you loved me so much that you wanted to see me happy. If I lost the game, I would have felt sad and down, something which you didn't want to happen. So therefore, the best thing you could do was to voluntarily lose the game so that I could win it.]² (8)

[Note—¹Bharat has cleverly told Lord Ram that a situation has arisen now which would test this nature of the Lord—for if the Lord does not accept his request to return home, it would definitely break Bharat's heart and make him very sad.

So, would the Lord allow it to happen; would the Lord like Bharat to feel sad in his heart? Lord Ram must have been amused at this particular statement of Bharat, for the Lord could have seen what Bharat hints at.

The reader will observe how Bharat is gradually building up his case in a diplomatic manner before actually putting forth his request to the Lord to oblige him by returning home and accepting the crown, the main purpose why Bharat has come to Chitrakoot.

²In this context, refer also to “Geetawali Ramayan”, Baal Kand, verse no. 45, stanza nos. 4-5.]

दो०. महुँ सनेह सकोच बस सनमुख कही न बैन ।
दरसन तृपित न आजु लागि पेम पिआसे नैन ॥ २६० ॥

dōhā.

mahūṁ sanēha sakōca basa sanamukha kahī na baina.
darasana tr̥pita na āju lagi pēma pi'āsē naina. 260.

I too had never stood up and spoken on your face out of my love for you, for I was always reluctant to break the principles of decency and etiquette in this regard. [I did not wish to show disrespect to you by countering you and speaking back to you.]

My eyes had always longed to see you from close, and this longing still persists till this day¹. (Doha no. 260)

[Note—¹Bharat cleverly tells Lord Ram that he wants to stay close to him so that he can see him daily, whenever he so wished. Say, how would that be possible if Lord Ram proceeds to the forest and Bharat is compelled to go back to Ayodhya?

As we have commented in the note appended to the Chaupai line no. 7 herein above, that precedes this Doha no. 260, Bharat is building up his case for Lord Ram's return, slowly and diplomatically.]

चौ०. बिधि न सकेउ सहि मोर दुलारा । नीच बीचु जननी मिस पारा ॥ १ ॥
यहउ कहत मोहि आजु न सोभा । अपनी समुझि साधु सुचि को भा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

bidhi na sakē'u sahi mōra dulārā. nīca bīcu jananī misa pārā. 1.
yaha'u kahata mōhi āju na sōbhā. apanī samujhi sādhu suci kō bhā. 2.

The over-jealous Creator (bidhi), who determines one's destiny and fate, could not tolerate the greatness of love and affection that was shown to me by the Lord (Ram), and so in order to vent his ire upon me and disrupt the happiness I had been enjoying, the evil Creator used my equally evil mother as a medium to bring disrepute to me and dash my hopes of perpetual joy at being loved so much by my Lord¹. (1)

But it does not behoove good for me to even say so at this juncture, for who has come to be recognized as being good and noble by declaring it himself?

[To wit, if I say that I am noble-hearted, saintly and pious, because of which Lord Ram loves me so much, and I am not at fault for his going to the forest, as this evil scheme was hatched by a jealous Creator who plotted against me and used my mother to give effect to his nefarious designs—it would seem to be a pretentious self-praise and a boastful talk. Indeed, it is not wise and good to proclaim one's own self as being saintly and pious. It is for others to judge and proclaim a person to be righteous, saintly and pious, and therefore worthy of honour.]² (2)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8 and Chanda line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 201; (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 202.

²This marks Bharat's humility, prudence and straightforwardness. He has clarified his position, while at the same time successfully deflected any criticism of self-praise and pretension of uprightness.]

मातु मंदि मैं साधु सुचाली । उर अस आनत कोटि कुचाली ॥ ३ ॥
फरइ कि कोदव बालि सुसाली । मुक्ता प्रसव कि संबुक काली ॥ ४ ॥

mātu mandi mair̥m sādhu sucālī. ura asa ānata kōṭi kucālī. 3.
phara'i ki kōdava bālī susālī. mukatā prasava ki sambuka kālī. 4.

To say or claim that my mother (Kaikeyi) is wicked and evil, whilst I am virtuous, pious and saintly—well even imagining such a thing seems to be incredulous and puts me in a piquant situation that is tantamount to speaking a thousand lies. [This is because it is ridiculous to say that a son is holy while his mother is evil, and no one would ever believe this to be true.]¹ (3)

Say, how can an inferior quality of seed of the rice plant ever produce high quality rice grains?

Similarly, how can a sickly and dirty black oyster ever produce pristine white pearl?

[To wit, since these two things are impossible to happen, so it is also unlikely that a wicked woman would ever produce a son who has a character that is just the opposite of his mother.] (4)

[Note—¹In this context, refer also to the following verses of Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, where Bharat has not only been exceptionally harsh at Kaikeyi but has also regretted that he was her son: (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 161—to Doha no. 162; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 164; (iii) Doha no. 178; (iv) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 180—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 181; (v) Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 201.]

सपनेहुँ दोसक लेसु न काहू । मोर अभाग उदधि अवगाहू ॥ ५ ॥
बिनु समुझें निज अघ परिपाकू । जारिउँ जायँ जननि कहि काकू ॥ ६ ॥

sapanēhum' dōsaka lēsu na kāhū. mōra abhāga udadhi avagāhū. 5.
binu samujhēm nija agha paripākū. jāri'um' jāyam' janani kahi kākū. 6.

Verily indeed, no one ought to be accused of the slightest fault or of committing any kind of wrongdoing, for I must acknowledge that every bit of unfortunate development owes its origin to my misfortunes and evil fate. (5)

I also must acknowledge that I have wrongly accused my mother (Kaikeyi) for wrongdoing without considering that everything that had happened was a consequence of my accumulated sins and misfortunes.¹ (6)

[Note—¹In these two verse nos. 5-6, Bharat regrets that he had been wrongly accusing his mother Kaikeyi for being the cause of all the unfortunate developments leading to king Dasrath's death and Lord Ram going to the forest, for since he had been named as the primary reason why Kaikeyi had wanted Lord Ram to leave Ayodhya so that Bharat ascends the throne, it is obvious that though he himself was not directly involved in any thing that had happened, but it was his evil fate and the accumulated results of his misdeeds of the past that compelled his mother to create a mighty nuisance that precipitated in the form of the unfortunate events.

So, why did Bharat's evil Fate chose his mother to carry out her evil scheme? It is because such developments would give Bharat a very bad name, and load him with a huge burden of ignominy and guilt for all times to come. Bharat's cunning 'Fate' knew that it would be virtually impossible for it to manipulate Bharat himself, so it decided upon this stratagem to indirectly wreak havoc on his reputation by involving his own mother, because then it would be very difficult for Bharat to prove his innocence.

In this context, refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 47; (ii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 48—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 49 (citizens of Ayodhya); (iii) Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 165 (Kaushalya); (iv) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 179 (Bharat); (v) Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 180 (Bharat); (vi) Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 201 (Bharat's regret); (vii) Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 202 (citizens of Ayodhya at Sringeripur); and (viii) Doha no. 206 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it (sage Bharadwaj).

It ought to be noted here that sage Bharadwaj's words to Bharat*— wherein the sage has comforted Bharat by telling him that Kaikeyi should not be blamed for the misfortunes and the unfortunate events that unfolded in Ayodhya, and hinted that when the Creator, who determines the fate of a living being, becomes inimical for any reason, then he would create situations that sabotage everything that is good for the person concerned, and on the contrary create things that put the person to immense discomfort, misery and hardship, and therefore Bharat should not unnecessarily feel guilty and perturbed for no fault of his own—has had a profound impact on Bharat's mind, and it is reflected in what he says during this meeting in Chitrakoot. {*Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 206—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 207.}

To wit, Bharat's humility and good nature comes to the fore here when he blames his own fate and providence, instead of Kaikeyi, for all the wrong things that had happened at Ayodhya, and says that he can't absolve himself of responsibility for

whatever that happened. Bharat regrets that he had been blaming and taunting Kaikeyi unnecessarily, for whatever that had happened was the consequence of his own sins.]

हृदयँ हेरि हारेउँ सब ओरा । एकहि भाँति भलेहिँ भल मोरा ॥ ७ ॥
गुर गोसाइँ साहिब सिय रामू । लागत मोहि नीक परिनामू ॥ ८ ॥

hr̥dayam̐ hēri hārē'um̐ saba ōrā. ēkahi bhām̐ti bhalēhim̐ bhala mōrā. 7.
gura gōsā'im̐ sāhiba siya rāmū. lāgata mōhi nīka parināmū. 8.

I have mentally explored all possibilities and avenues I could think of, but feel frustrated as I fail to find an alternate solution—for the only solution that I could arrive at which would grant me welfare and provide deliverance to me from the perplexity I find myself in, is (as follows) --- (7)

--- That I declare that my revered guru (sage Vasistha) is my moral guide and advisor (gura gōsā'im̐), while Lord Ram and Sita are my two lords and masters (sāhiba siya rāmū).

This being the case, if I leave my fate and destiny in their hands, if I let them decide what is good for me and my future, I will be doing a wise and the most correct thing I can think of.¹ (8)

[Note—¹This is Bharat's answer to sage Vasistha's instructions to speak his mind freely and frankly*1, as well as Lord Ram's declaration that he is ready to do what Bharat wants*2.

{*1 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 258 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it; and (ii) Doha no. 259.

*2 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 259.}

To wit, Bharat has deftly put the responsibility to decide what should be done on the shoulders of sage Vasistha and Lord Ram. This decision of Bharat was very right and correct, because when his guru and beloved elder brother were present, it would be highly indecent and ill-mannered for him to appear to be the determining authority and make a final statement that must be obeyed by everyone else. It is obvious that if Bharat said that he wants such and such thing to happen, then both sage Vasistha and Lord Ram would have to agree to it as they themselves have declared that whatever Bharat wants to done would be good for all.

Bharat was a highly wise, saintly, righteous, prudent and disciplined person, so he would never like to impose his views on either sage Vasistha or Lord Ram. He would like to obey what they told him to do, rather than the other way round. So therefore, he put the ball back in the court of sage Vasistha and Lord Ram—by declaring that the solution for the vexed problem is to be found by them, and not him.]

दो०. साधु सभाँ गुर प्रभु निकट कहउँ सुथल सतिभाउ ।
प्रेम प्रपंचु कि झूठ फुर जानहिँ मुनि रघुराउ ॥ २६१ ॥

dōhā.

sādhū sabhām̐ gura prabhu nikaṭa kaha'um̐ suthala satibhā'u.
prēma prapañcu ki jhūṭha phura jānahim̐ muni raghurā'u. 261.

Bharat continued: 'This is an august company attended by sages, my guru and my lord (i.e. Lord Ram). Besides this, this place of the Lord's hermitage is in a holy site (known as Chitrakoot).

In such a situation, I can't dare to speak a lie; whether my love is true or pretentious, whether what I say is true and spoken honestly, or is a bunch of lies said with deceitful intent—well, being all-knowing it is easy for the sage (Vasistha) as well as Lord Ram to see through it.¹ (Doha no. 261)

[Note—¹Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 256 where Bharat has clearly stressed this point.

Bharat wished to emphasize that whatever he was submitting was from the depth of his heart, and he is not being pretentious or cunning in any way whatever; he was not trying to gain cheap popularity by pretending to be very obedient to his guru or elder brother, but he is absolutely honest in his words when he says that whatever they suggest or command he is willing to obey it, as he is sure it would be for his welfare and good.

That whatever Bharat says is honest, truthful and straight from the heart, words that are devoid of deceit, conceit and pretensions, is also reiterated in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 167.]

चौ०. भूपति मरन पेम पनु राखी । जननी कुमति जगतु सबु साखी ॥ १ ॥

देखि न जाहिं बिकल महतारीं । जरहिं दुसह जर पुर नर नारीं ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

bhūpati marana pēma panu rākhī. janani kumati jagatu sabu sākhi. 1.
dēkhi na jāhim̐ bikala mahatārīm̐. jarahim̐ dusaha jara pura nara nārīm̐. 2.

[Bharat's sense of guilt, grief and sorrow once again overtook him, and unable to restrain himself he lamented sorely—] 'The king (Dasrath) had died to uphold his vows of love (for Lord Ram, that he would not live without the Lord¹, and the whole world bears witness to the wickedness of my mother (Kaikeyi) (which I can't deny)². (1)

It is impossible to see how tormented and grieved all the mothers (i.e. Kaushalya, Sumitra) are³.

Similarly, the citizens of Ayodhya are also tormented by the heat of grief that virtually roasts them alive, making them very miserable⁴. (2)

[Note—¹Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precede Doha no. 151; (b) Ayodhya Kand, (ii) Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 82; (iii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 155—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 156.

²Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 47; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 51; (iii) Chaupai line no. 3 that

precedes Doha no. 84; (iv) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 110; (v) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 122; (vi) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 201; (vii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 223.

³Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 156.

⁴Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 46—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 49; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precede Doha no. 51; (iii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 83—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 84; (iv) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 156.]

महीं सकल अनरथ कर मूला । सो सुनि समुझि सहिउँ सब सूला ॥ ३ ॥
सुनि बन गवनु कीन्ह रघुनाथा । करि मुनि बेष लखन सिय साथा ॥ ४ ॥
बिनु पानहिन्ह पयादेहि पाएँ । संकरु साखि रहेउँ एहि घाएँ ॥ ५ ॥

mahīm sakala anaratha kara mūlā. sō suni samujhi sahi'um̃ saba sūlā. 3.
suni bana gavanu kīnha raghunāthā. kari muni bēṣa lakhana siya sāthā. 4.
binu pānahinha payādēhi pā'ēm̃. saṅkaru sākhi rahē'um̃ ēhi ghā'ēm̃. 5.

And I alone am the root cause of all misfortunes¹. Hence, keeping this in mind I have to somehow bear with the sharp criticism and pain that it inflicts upon me². (3)

When I heard that Lord Ram (the Lord of the Raghus; “raghunāthā”) has gone to the forest attired as a hermit, with Sita and Laxman who accompanied him³, --- (4)

--- Walking barefoot⁴: I say under oath, with Lord Shiva as my witness that I ain't speaking falsehood, that it was the reason why I immediately decided to proceed to meet the Lord in the forest itself (primarily to ask for forgiveness, and also to plead with the Lord to return home)⁵. (5)

[Note—¹Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 48; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 164; (iii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 178; (iv) Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 179; (v) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 181.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 160; (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 167—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 168; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 212.

³Bharat had come to learn of it directly from mother Kaushalya—refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 165—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 166.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 179; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 182; (iii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 188.

⁴Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 203; (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 216; (iii) Doha no. 222.

⁵Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 182—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 183.]

बहुरि निहारि निषाद सनेहू । कुलिस कठिन उर भयउ न बेहू ॥ ६ ॥
 अब सबु आँखिन्ह देखेउँ आई । जिअत जीव जड़ सबड़ सहाई ॥ ७ ॥
 जिन्हहि निरखि मग साँपिनि बीछी । तजहिं बिषम बिषु तामस तीछी ॥ ८ ॥

bahuri nihāri niṣāda sanēhū. kulisa kaṭhina ura bhaya'u na bēhū. 6.
 aba sabu āṁkhiṇha dēkhē'um' ā'ī. ji'ata jīva jara saba'i sahā'ī. 7.
 jinhahi nirakhi maga sāṁpini bīchī. tajahim biṣama biṣu tāmasa tīchī. 8.

Thereafter, when I observed the depth of Nishad's affection for Lord Ram, it is such an irony that still my heart, which seems to be stiffer (harsh, hard, stubborn, difficult to mend) than the hardest thing in existence ("kulisa kaṭhina"), did not break from grief and repentance.

[Bharat lamented gravely and remorsefully: "I survived blow after blow without my heart bursting with grief and letting me die an honourable death. First it was the news of the death of my father; then I saw the whole family as well as the city submerged in grief and buffeted by waves of excess of sorrows. As if this agony was not enough, I heard of the horrifying news that my beloved Lord Ram was banished to the forest with Sita and Laxman. These blows should have been enough to crack my heart, but it was so stubborn that it survived. Finally I came to realize how immense Guha Nishad's love for the Lord was. It is a matter of great shame for me that I could dare to stand before him and talk to him inspite of knowing that I was the only cause of this sorrowful story unfolding. Under normal circumstances, a person would have been buried alive out of shame, sense of guilt and burden of eternal ignominy after all this, but woe betide me that I stood boldly and bore with it, that I had the courage to stand before Nishad and talk to him without my head slumping in shame, just because my stubborn heart refused to collapse and let me get over everything."] (6)

Woe betide me and curse to my fate that I saw everything unfolding before my eyes, and yet survived. Indeed it is so because it is a punishment for me so that I can suffer perpetual ignominy and grief for the rest of my life without relief of any kind.

[“Had my heart collapsed, it would have been the end of all my sufferings. But as it kept me alive, it has put me in a situation wherein I would have to suffer for a long time till my end comes. I will be tormented and virtually roasted slowly throughout my life like a great sinner is hauled over hot charcoal in hell.”] (7)

[Expressing disgust and utter contempt for Kaikeyi for her wickedness and heartless action of sending Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman to the forest, Bharat pours scorn on her as he said bitterly, with sarcasm in his words as is clear in this Chaupai and the Doha that follows it—]

Even the poisonous snakes and the scorpions on the forest path had abandoned their poisonous and vicious nature when they beheld Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman (walking barefoot), --- (8)

दो०. तेइ रघुनंदनु लखनु सिय अनहित लागे जाहि ।
तासु तनय तजि दुसह दुख दैउ सहावइ काहि ॥ २६२ ॥
dōhā.

tē'i raghunandanu lakhanu siya anahita lāgē jāhi.
tāsu tanaya taji dusaha dukha dai'u sahāva'i kāhi. 262.

The same Lord Ram, Laxman and Sita (whose mere sight motivated the snake and the scorpion to abandon their poisonous and vicious nature) were deemed inimical by her (Kaikeyi, my evil mother) (so much so that she chose to punish them by banishing them to the forest).

Whom else will the jealous Gods choose to vent their ire and inflict interminable pain and sufferings other than me by making me her son?' (Doha no. 262)

[Note—Bharat taunts Kaikeyi as well as the Gods when he says sarcastically: “Gods has become so jealous of me, because I lived a happy and contented life as I loved Lord Ram and the Lord loved me too, so much so that they decided to pull the rug from under my feet. Towards this end, they put their heads together and devised a means to accomplish their nefarious design by trapping my mother and making her an accomplice. She was so stupid that she could not see through the dirty tricks of the Gods, and fell for the bait. The rest is history that is well known to everyone. I was unfortunately dragged in and made a party without my knowledge and consent, but by the time I realized what had happened it was too late for me to make amends. Woe to Kaikeyi and cursed she be that she saw an enemy to her interests in the persons of Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman, who are so merciful, benign and compassionate by their inherent nature.

It is so incredulous and absurd a proposition to even imagine that Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman will be someone's enemy when even a snake and a scorpion, who by their innate nature are unforgiving and vicious, decided to abandon their hostile character, and become friendly and docile instead, when they saw the three, i.e. Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman. Say, how then can they become an enemy of Kaikeyi; how can they do anything that would harm her? She seems to be worse than a serpent and a scorpion, and unfortunately I was made her son by Fate. I don't know what to say and how to shake off this ignominy cast upon my shoulders by Providence.”]

चौ०. सुनि अति बिकल भरत बर बानी । आरति प्रीति बिनय नय सानी ॥ १ ॥
सोक मगन सब सभाँ खभारू । मनहुँ कमल बन परेउ तुसारू ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

suni ati bikala bharata bara bānī. ārati prīti binaya naya sānī. 1.
sōka magana saba sabhām' khabhārū. manahum' kamala bana parē'u tusārū.

2.

Hearing the words of Bharat, words that expressed his intense mental agitation, his anxiety, his agony as well as the depth of his love and affection (for Lord Ram), his humility and a sense of submission, his willingness to conform to rules of righteousness, probity and propriety—all spoken with prudence and great politeness, - -- [1]

--- The whole assembly was plunged in a bout of sorrow and gloom; everyone was overwrought with excessive sadness and despondency, as if frost has hit a bed of lotus flowers¹ [2]. (1-2)

[Note—¹Lotus flowers wither away in frost. Likewise, Bharat's pitiful face, his sad demeanours and distraught expressions, the pain in his voice and words, left everyone dismayed and full of sorrows and remorse. A pall of gloom and helplessness descended on the whole assembly; every person sat with a lowered head, with sadness writ large on his face.]

कहि अनेक बिधि कथा पुरानी । भरत प्रबोधु कीन्ह मुनि ग्यानी ॥ ३ ॥
बोले उचित बचन रघुनंदू । दिनकर कुल कैरव बन चंदू ॥ ४ ॥

kahi anēka bidhi kathā purānī. bharata prabōdhu kīnha muni gyānī. 3.
bōlē ucita bacana raghunandū. dinakara kula kairava bana candū. 4.

[After a pause when there was a pin-drop silence, it was sage Vasistha who spoke first. He used his wit and skills to comfort Bharat and assuage his feeling of guilt, shame and sadness that had so much confounded him and made him so overwrought with grief.]

By telling him (Bharat) many kinds of incidents and legends from the past that were similar to his case (and supporting them by citing ancient traditions and scriptures), the wise and learned sage (Vasistha)¹ comforted Bharat and soothed his tormented heart. (3)

Then Lord Ram—the illustrious son of king Raghu's family (raghunandū), the Lord who was like a moon for the lily flowers (kairava bana candū) symbolizing the Solar Race (dinakara kula)²—interceded, and he spoke wise words that were fit for the occasion. (4)

[Note—¹We have read earlier that during the conference held at Ayodhya after the last rites of king Dasrath had been completed, sage Vasistha had used the same method to comfort Bharat and help him overcome the sense of profound grief that had confounded him—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 171.

During that meeting, the sage had explained the situation in detail to Bharat and tried in vain to persuade him to accept the crown of the kingdom in the absence of his brother, Lord Ram—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 171—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 175.

To cite ancient legends in order to give comfort to a distraught and grieving person is a standard method employed by elders even today. Sage Vasistha had done it frequently as narrated in Ram Charit Manas—apropos: Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 156; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 247.

²The lily flower blooms when the full moon rises in the sky. This metaphor is used to say that Lord Ram provides joy to all the members of the Solar Race to which his illustrious family belonged, and which descended from an ancient king whose name was 'Raghu'.

After sage Vasistha had done his bit to comfort Bharat, Lord Ram spoke up to complete the process.]

तात जायँ जियँ करहु गलानी । ईस अधीन जीव गति जानी ॥ ५ ॥
 तीनि काल तिभुअन मत मोरें । पुन्यसिलोक तात तर तोरें ॥ ६ ॥
 उर आनत तुम्ह पर कुटिलाई । जाइ लोकु परलोकु नसाई ॥ ७ ॥
 दोसु देहिं जननिहि जड़ तेई । जिन्ह गुर साधु सभा नहिं सेई ॥ ८ ॥

tāta jāyam' jiyam' karahu galānī. īsa adhīna jīva gati jānī. 5.
 tīni kāla tibhu'ana mata mōrēm. pun'yasilōka tāta tara tōrēm. 6.
 ura ānata tumha para kuṭilā'ī. jā'ī lōku paralōku nasā'ī. 7.
 dōsu dēhim jananihi jaṛa tē'ī. jinha gura sādhu sabhā nahim sē'ī. 8.

Lord Ram said to Bharat: 'My dear (tāta)! You ought not to regret and feel so remorseful because a living being's fate and destiny (jīva gati) is in the hands of God (īsa adhīna)¹. (5)

In my opinion there has not been, is not at present, and shall not be in the future anyone who is as virtuous and glorious as you are anywhere in the world, in any of its three divisions (i.e. in the heaven, on the earth, as well as in the nether world). (6)

If anyone thinks ill-will of you, if anyone casts aspersions on you and your immaculate character, if anyone doubts your integrity, honesty and truthfulness, if anyone thinks you are wicked, evil and crooked—then I say such a person is doomed and is liable to lose all merit and credentials; his fate is doomed in this world while he is alive, and so will be his fate in the afterlife². (7)

Further, only those persons who are ignorant and stupid, those who have not served either their guru or had a communion with saintly persons, would accuse the mother (Kaikeyi) of wrongdoing³.

[To wit, she should not be blamed for anything that had happened, for again I will reiterate that it was the will of Providence, the fiat of Fate and the dictates of Destiny that impelled her to do what she did (apropos: Chaupai line no. 5 herein above).] (8)

[Note—¹To wit, a person has no control over the course of developments in his life. What, however, he has control over is how he reacts to such developments, and what he does in response. Though he cannot change the situation, yet he can definitely control how he deals with it, what he does in response to it, as his actions would then

decide his future as well as his immediate present. What has already happened is part of history and time gone by; it cannot be changed by any means. But one can certainly change what comes next. Sitting and grieving, regretting and lamenting, making accusations and pointing fingers at others for things and events that have already become a part of history won't help in the least; what would help is to keep bygones as bygones, and look at the future.

Sage Bharadwaj had also told Bharat not to unnecessarily regret over what had happened. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 206; (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 209.

Earlier, Guha Nishad had too comforted Bharat by advising him to stop lamenting and regretting: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 201.

Nishad had gone as far as telling Bharat that whatever had happened is a thing of the past, but he must find peace that the future holds good for him because Lord Ram loves him very much—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chanda line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 201.

Kaushalya too had a similar opinion, for she too tells Bharat that he ought not to regret for no fault of his—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 165.

As for sage Vasistha, he had told Bharat a similar thing during the meeting at Ayodhya—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 171 along with Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it.

The revered deity of Triveni at Prayag has also told Bharat that he must not be regretful at all for whatever that has happened—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 205.

²Refer to a similar opinion about Bharat that the wise citizens of Ayodhya had*1, as well as sage Bharadwaj's own views regarding him*2 in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, *1= Doha no. 48 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it; and *2 = (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 208, (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 210.

³In this connection, there are many verses in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, that reiterate this view. For example: (i) Doha no. 35 (Dasrath); (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 49 (citizens); (iii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 92 (Laxman to Nishad); (iv) Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 122 (villagers on the way: they say that it is their good fortune which had prevailed over Kaikeyi and Dasrath to send Lord Ram to the forest so that these humble folks can have a glimpse of the Lord and derive immense joy and blissfulness); (v) Doha no. 171 along with Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it; and (vi) Doha no. 206 (sage Bharadwaj).]

दो०. मिटिहहिं पाप प्रपंच सब अखिल अमंगल भार ।

लोक सुजसु परलोक सुखु सुमिरत नामु तुम्हार ॥ २६३ ॥

dōhā.

miṭihahiṁ pāpa prapaṁca saba akhila amaṅgala bhāra.
lōka sujasu paralōka sukhu sumirata nāmu tumhāra. 263.

[Lord Ram praised Bharat for his glorious virtues and declared unequivocally as follows—] ‘Verily I say that the burden of a person’s sins of all kinds would be eliminated in this world, and so would all other types of misfortunes and ill-fate that may torment him if he remembers you and your glories.

At the same time, if a person invokes your auspicious name (e.g. uses your name to make an oath or to prove that he is honest and speaking the truth), then he would gain good fame and reputation in this world while he is alive, and happiness and joy even after death in the afterlife.’¹ (Doha no. 263)

[Note—¹In this connection, refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 217; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 223; (iii) Doha no. 223.

Sage Bharadwaj too was highly appreciative of Bharat, and he has also lavishly praised him in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 207—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 210.

Bharat’s glories had, in the meanwhile, become well known by the time he had met Bharadwaj—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 206; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 220; (iii) Doha no. 223 along with Chaupai line no. 1 that follow it.

What has been said in praise of Bharat by Lord Ram, in Doha no. 263 and Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede it, can be summarised as follows: “There is no one comparable to you (Bharat) in the entire world having three dimensions (the past, the present and the future; the heaven, the earth and the nether worlds) in possessing all the virtues that are considered grand, sublime, divine, holy, auspicious, righteous, proper and noble. Anyone who casts aspersions on you (Bharat) or doubts your integrity and devotion is sure to be condemned in the world and lose whatever good name he might have in this life, besides ruining his future (i.e. even after his death people will not forgive him for his ill-spoken words for you). Verily, by remembering your auspicious name, all negativities and the burden of inauspiciousness, evil and sins vanish, and one is not only able to acquire good name and fame in this world but also ensure all happiness and joys in the world hereinafter.”]

चौ०. कहउँ सुभाउ सत्य सिव साखी । भरत भूमि रह राउरि राखी ॥ १ ॥

तात कुतरक करहु जनि जाएँ । बैर पेम नहिं दुरइ दुराएँ ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kaha'um̐ subhā'u satya siva sākhī. bharata bhūmi raha rā'uri rākhī. 1.
tāta kutaraka karahu jani jā'ēm̐. baira pēma nahim̐ dura'i durā'ēm̐. 2.

Lord Ram continued: ‘Oh Bharat, I always speak the truth as it is my nature (kaha'um̐ subhā'u satya), and furthermore I invoke Lord Shiva to bear witness to what I say now (siva sākhī): that all the good characters on earth are there because Bharat takes care of them and ensures that they are well protected, because he is the lord and the king of those virtues (bharata bhūmi raha rā'uri rākhī)¹. (1)

My dear (tāta)! Please don't engage in unwarranted and wrong hypothesis about yourself², for one's affection as well as hatred for another cannot be disguised by anyone, nor can they be hidden and kept secret for long³. (2)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 197; (b) Ayodhya Kand, (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 233; (iii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 238.

Sage Bharadwaj has also praised Bharat and glorified him in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 210.

Lord Ram has called Bharat a “king who supports the earth”. The Lord implies that since Bharat represents all imaginable good virtues in this world, and since a king is responsible for protecting his subjects, so therefore whatever goodness is there on this earth (i.e. in this world) are sustained and protected by Bharat; it is he who ensures that the virtues of righteousness, probity, propriety, goodness and auspiciousness of character that are present on this earth are able to flourish and are taken good care of.

²Lord Ram tells Bharat: “My dear, don't think that I have lost trust in thee; that I don't love thee; that people doubt thine integrity, that the world thinks thou had a secret hand in the scheme Kaikeyi hatched that led to my coming to the forest, and so on and so forth, an imaginary situation that has made thee so regretful, sad and distraught. Believe me that there is no cause for it. There is no reason why thee shouldst try to prove that thou lovest me, thou havest affection for me, thou art devoted to me, and thou wert shocked when thou learnt what thy mother had done. Everyone is aware of thine innocence, as well as thy deep love and devotion for me, and I too am fully aware of it. Thou need not prove it; it is well known. So therefore, there is no reason whatsoever that thou shouldst feel so shameful, remorseful and guilty as thou art feeling at present. My dear Bharat, please get over it, and cheer up.”

In this connection, refer to what Lord told Laxman in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 231—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 232.

What Lord Ram tells Bharat here is an extension of what he has already said a while ago in Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precede Doha no. 263 herein above.

³Lord Ram explains in the following verses, by giving an example, why what he says is true regarding it being difficult for one to conceal one's feeling either of affection and friendliness or of hatred and animosity for another person.]

मुनि गन निकट बिहग मृग जाहीं । बाधक बधिक बिलोकि पराहीं ॥ ३ ॥

हित अनहित पसु पच्छिउ जाना । मानुष तनु गुन ग्यान निधाना ॥ ४ ॥

muni gana nikaṭa bihaga mṛga jāhīm. bādhaka badhika bilōki parāhīm. 3.
hita anahita pasu pacchi'u jānā. mānuṣa tanu guna gyāna nidhānā. 4.

Birds and animals go near a sage or any other pious soul without having any fear, but when they see a hunter they run away as fast as they can. (3)

Why? It is because they (birds and animals) realize by their natural instinct what is good for them and what is not¹.

So therefore, if an animal and a bird can know by instinct what is in their interest and what isn't, a human being would naturally know what is in his interest and what is not much better than them, because he has far greater intelligence, is more wise and learned, and is deemed to be an embodiment of knowledge that grants him analytical abilities to ascertain what the truth is behind any development or situation as compared to the humble animal and the bird who are not privileged enough to be able to do so.² (4)

[Note—¹An exactly similar idea is expressed elsewhere also—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 19 (Manthara tells Kaikeyi).

²Lord Ram explains why he knows that Bharat is devoted to him and loves him, that he is innocent and sincerely wants Lord Ram to forgive him and return home. So therefore, Bharat need not explain it and try to prove it.

To drive home his point, Lord Ram uses the example of animals and birds. These poor creatures with rudimentary intelligence know by instinct what is harmful for them and what is not. They know that a sage would be friendly towards them, so they go near him without fear. On the contrary, when they see a hunter they know by instinct that they would be killed if they ventured near, so they flee.

A human being obviously would know it better as he has far greater intelligence and wisdom than animals and birds; he can analyse things and circumstances to arrive at the truth behind a development. He can know by instinct, which we would like to call one's 'sixth sense', if the other person is friendly or inimical. Even an ordinary person has the ability to sniff what is good or bad for him. Lord Ram, on the other hand, is extremely wise, enlightened and all-knowing*. So therefore, nothing can remain a secret from the Lord. {*Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha nos. 256 and 257.}

Hence, Lord Ram tells Bharat, it is not difficult for him to determine that Bharat is honest, truthful and sincere in whatever he has said. So therefore, Bharat ought naught to worry on this count and try to prove his innocence any more than what he has already done.]

तात तुम्हहि मैं जानउँ नीकें । करौं काह असमंजस जीकें ॥ ५ ॥

राखेउ रायँ सत्य मोहि त्यागी । तनु परिहरेउ पेम पन लागी ॥ ६ ॥

tāta tumhahi mair̥ jāna'um̐ nīkēm̐. karaum̐ kāha asaman̐jasa jīkēm̐. 5.
rākhē'u rāyam̐ satya mōhi tyāgī. tanu pariharē'u pēma pana lāgī. 6.

My dear (tāta)! I know deep in my heart the truth about you; I know it fully well, and I need not be told anything about you.

But the circumstances are such that I am in a dilemma, not knowing what to do. (5)

The king (Dasrath) had abandoned me (i.e. sent me to the forest) to uphold his commitment to truth¹, and as a result of which he had to leave his own body (i.e. he had to die) to prove how much he loved me². (6)

[Note—¹King Dasrath had made two promises to Kaikeyi in some ancient time, and she reminded him to keep his words when demanding that Lord Ram be sent to the forest, and Bharat, her son, be appointed to the throne instead. The king was caught unawares—he was left with no choice. Either he had to go back on his words, which would mean he lies, or he had to keep his words, which meant he had to do what Kaikeyi demanded. Left with no alternative, the distraught king preferred to uphold the virtue of truthfulness and agreed to both the demands of Kaikeyi.

{Refer to—Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 27—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 29; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precede Doha no. 30.}

²The result was that Dasrath died in the grief of separation from Lord Ram whom he loved more dearly than his own life. To wit, Dasrath abandoned Lord Ram to uphold the virtues of truthfulness, and he abandoned his own body to uphold his abiding love for Lord Ram.

{Refer to—Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 33; (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 81—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 82; (iii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 155—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 156.}]

तासु बचन मेटत मन सोचू । तेहि तें अधिक तुम्हार सँकोचू ॥ ७ ॥

ता पर गुर मोहि आयसु दीन्हा । अवसि जो कहहु चहउँ सोइ कीन्हा ॥ ८ ॥

tāsu bacana mēṭata mana sōcū. tēhi tēm adhika tumhāra sam̐kōcū. 7.
tā para gura mōhi āyasu dīnhā. avasi jō kahahu caha'um̐ sō'i kīnhā. 8.

[Lord Ram continued—] ‘It puts me in a very piquant situation—because on the one hand my heart hesitates and feels exceedingly reluctant to disobey such a great and honourable king’s words by going against them (i.e. return home before the end of fourteen years he had ordered me to live in the forest), and on the other hand I have a greater hesitation and am more reluctant to go against your wishes (i.e. return home as you demand). (7)

On the top of it is my guru’s (i.e. sage Vasistha’s) orders that I ought to do what you say¹. Hence, I would like to do what you wish me to do. (8)

[Note—¹Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 257 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it; (ii) Doha no. 258 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it; (iii) Doha no. 259.]

दो०. मनु प्रसन्न करि सकुच तजि कहहु करौं सोइ आजु ।

सत्यसंध रघुबर बचन सुनि भा सुखी समाजु ॥ २६४ ॥

dōhā.

manu prasanna kari sakuca taji kahahu karaum sō'i āju.
satyasandha raghubara bacana suni bhā sukhī samāju. 264.

‘This being the case’, said Lord Ram, ‘become cheerful in your heart and freely, without any hesitation, tell me what I am to do, and I would do accordingly¹.’

When the assembly heard these words of Lord Ram, everyone felt happy as they knew that the Lord would keep his promise (of doing according to what Bharat wants) because he is true to his words (satyasandha raghubara bacana)². (Doha no. 264)

[Note—¹This is in compliance to sage Vasistha’s instructions to Lord Ram as mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha nos. 258 and 259.

²Everyone wanted that Lord Ram returns home. We have read earlier that when Bharat declared his intention to go to the forest to bring Lord Ram back, a wave of joy spread throughout Ayodhya; every single person in the city was jubilant*1. Now that goal was on the verge of bearing fruits. Once Lord Ram declared that he is ready to do what Bharat says, there was little doubt left in the minds of the people that their aim has been accomplished successfully. But little did these unfortunate souls know that there is an adage that says “there is a gap between the cup and the lip”. When it was almost certain that Bharat would put forward his request to Lord Ram to return home, and even go the extent of volunteering to go to the forest himself on behalf of the Lord*2, no one could imagine that at the end of it everything would be in vain, and they would have to return empty-handed to Ayodhya to lead a life of grief as they had been leading before going to Chitrakoot*3.

{*1 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 183—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 185.

*2 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 256; (ii) Doha no. 268—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 269.

*3 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 315—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 317; (ii) Doha no. 322 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it.]

चौ०. सुर गन सहित सभय सुरराजू । सोचहिं चाहत होन अकाजू ॥ १ ॥
बनत उपाउ करत कछु नाहीं । राम सरन सब गे मन माहीं ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sura gana sahita sabhaya surarājū. sōcahīm cāhata hōna akājū. 1.
banata upā'u karata kachu nāhīm. rāma sarana saba gē mana māhīm. 2.

The king of the gods (i.e. Indra), along with all the other gods, became afraid and very perturbed that their entire scheme was about to miscarry¹. They brooded over the matter and pondered if some mechanism could be found to prevent Bharat’s objective from bearing fruit. (1)

But no matter how hard they tried, they could not think of a device that would serve their purpose. So ultimately they took refuge with Lord Ram (to seek his help; they left everything in the hands of the Lord with a request to do something that their interests are protected). (2)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 217 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it.

Why were the gods so worried? It was because if Lord Ram yields to Bharat's pitiful pleadings, and out of compassion for him decides to return home, then the entire plan whereby the Lord was to go after the demons who lived deep in the forest, and beyond in the island of Lanka, to eliminate them, would come to a naught. The fear of the gods was exacerbated because Lord Ram has declared his willingness to do what Bharat says*1, and sage Vasistha too has supported him*2.

Earlier, the guru of the gods had advised them to exercise restraint, because Bharat is a great devotee of Lord Ram, and so therefore if the gods played dirty tricks against Bharat, it will be to their own peril*3. They should rather seek refuge with Lord Ram as well as Bharat, for then they would be morally bound to look after the interests of the gods too. Bharat is by nature a pious soul, and totally devoted to Lord Ram. Lord Ram, in his turn, is always vigilant towards protecting the interests of the gods*4. So though Bharat wants the Lord to return home, the Lord himself would manage things politely and skillfully as he knows that it would be against the interests of the gods to return to Ayodhya at this juncture.

Hence, there is nothing to worry for the gods if they submit themselves before Lord Ram and pray to him for salvation, for then Lord Ram would privately confide with Bharat the reason for going to the forest, and surely and certainly Bharat would agree, as he is very obedient to the Lord*5.

The gods remembered this wise advice of their guru, and that is why we read in these present verses the they quickly decide to submit themselves before Lord Ram and seek help from him instead of creating some nasty mischief with Bharat.

As we shall see shortly, this decision of the gods stood them in good stead, for soon Bharat would realize that a great burden has been put on his shoulders*6, and it is not a simple issue as he thought it to be in the beginning. So, Bharat wisely and prudently decided that it would be best for him to leave things in the hands of Lord Ram, and just follow whatever the Lord orders*7.

{*1 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 264.

*2 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 258 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it; (ii) Doha no. 259; and Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 264.

*3 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 218; (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 219.

*4 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 220.

*5 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 220; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 266.

*6 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 266.

*7 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 266.}

बहुरि बिचारि परस्पर कहहीं । रघुपति भगत भगति बस अहहीं ॥ ३ ॥
 सुधि करि अंबरीष दुरबासा । भे सुर सुरपति निपट निरासा ॥ ४ ॥

bahuri bicāri paraspara kahahīm. raghupati bhagata bhagati basa ahahīm. 3.
 sudhi kari ambarīṣa durabāsā. bhē sura surapati nipaṭa nirāsā. 4.

The gods discussed the matter amongst themselves and came to the conclusion Lord Ram is under the influence of his devotees by the virtue of the powerful force of 'devotion' that they have¹. (3)

No sooner they concluded about the immensity of the influence that a devotee has on Lord Ram, but they were immediately plunged in another bout of gloom and dismay, because they remembered the episode pertaining to sage Durbasa and king Ambarish which made them feel hopeless and helpless². (4)

[Note—¹Lord Ram is under the sway of his devotee; the Lord cannot defy the wishes of his devotees for he is under the spell or influence of his devotees by the virtue of devotion that they have for him, and so the Lord willingly does what the devotee wishes. This fact highlights the great spiritual value of Bhakti—the grand virtues of having devotion, love and faith in the Lord God as exemplified by Bharat.

In this context, refer to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 219 (advice of the guru of the gods); (b) Uttar Kand, (ii) Chaupai line nos. 7-10 that precede Doha no. 86.

²In this context, refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 218 where this story is narrated in brief as a footnote.

The gods felt helpless that they have no power against a devotee of Lord Ram, and if a choice has to be made by Lord Ram between his devotee's wish and anyone else's wish, the Lord would always prefer his devotee. Since from all evidence so far, Bharat was bent in taking Lord Ram back to Ayodhya at all costs, gods fell distraught and hopeless that their wish to get the demons eliminated with the help of Lord Ram would come a cropper.]

सहे सुरन्ह बहु काल बिषादा । नरहरि किए प्रगट प्रह्लादा ॥ ५ ॥
 लगि लगि कान कहहिं धुनि माथा । अब सुर काज भरत के हाथा ॥ ६ ॥

sahē suranha bahu kāla biṣādā. narahari ki'ē pragāṭa prahalādā. 5.
 lagi lagi kāna kahahīm dhuni māthā. aba sura kāja bharata kē hāthā. 6.

The gods lamented and rued over the matter gravely. They recollected that in some ancient time, when the gods were being tormented by another demon (named Hiranyakashyap), it was one of the greatest devotees of the Lord, a boy named Prahalad (ironically, the son of the aforesaid demon himself), who had made it possible that the Lord reveal himself (in the form of Lord Narsingh or Nrisingh; the

half-lion and half-man incarnation of Lord Vishnu) and get rid of that cruel demon¹. (5)

This thought gave them some hope. They touched their own ears and beat their heads (as a sign of regret that they had planned to create mischief with Bharat, and asking him to forgive them), and unanimously decided that the work of the gods is no in the hands of Bharat². (6)

[Note—¹The story pertaining to Prahalad and demon Hiranyakashyap has been narrated in volume 1 of this Book (Ram Charit Manas) as a footnote appended to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 26 in Baal Kand (which is Canto 1 of this Book).

When the demon Hiranyakashyap had transcended all boundaries of decency and normalcy, tormenting the creatures and playing havoc with the rule of law set by the Supreme Being, it was Prahalad, the demon's son, who became instrumental in the revelation of Lord Narsingh, the half-lion and half-man incarnation of Lord Vishnu, who then killed the demon.

It implies that it was a 'devotee' of the Lord who had come to the aid of the gods by getting this demon eliminated, though the demon was his own father. So likewise, the gods now hoped that Bharat would help them by enabling Lord Ram to go further into the forest, though it would mean a lot of physical sufferings to the Lord whom Bharat loved so much.

To wit, the gods unanimously concluded that Bharat, being a pious and helpful soul, would not come in the way of fulfillment of their wishes —i.e. in the elimination of the demons led by Ravana, by allowing Lord Ram to continue with his journey into the forest.

²To wit, the gods reflected on the matter and concluded that it is best to leave their welfare in the hands of the Lord's devotee, in this case Bharat. Just like in the previous case when no one could help the gods to get rid of the demon Hiranyakashyap, it was one of the devotees of the Lord, i.e. Prahalad, who had helped them by being instrumental in revealing Lord Narsingh who killed the demon. So therefore, the gods now pinned their hopes on Bharat and hoped that he would give precedence to the importance of their work over his own limited agenda of taking Lord Ram back home.

The guru of the gods too had given them a similar advice earlier—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 219 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it.

The gods had felt very happy and had showered flowers on Bharat on that occasion—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 220.]

आन उपाउ न देखिअ देवा । मानत रामु सुसेवक सेवा ॥ ७ ॥

हियँ सपेम सुमिरहु सब भरतहि । निज गुन सील राम बस करतहि ॥ ८ ॥

āna upā'u na dēkhi'a dēvā. mānata rāmu susēvaka sēvā. 7.

hiyam̐ sapēma sumirahu saba bharatahi. nija guna sīla rāma basa karatahi. 8.

The gods got into a huddle, and after extensive discussions they found no other means except to submit themselves before Bharat—for they realized that Lord Ram gives great credit to those who serve his devotees.

[The gods concluded that the only way to please Lord Ram is to please his devotee. Hence, if they wanted their work done, it is of paramount importance to take Bharat into confidence. If Bharat is satisfied, if he agrees, then the rest would be smooth sailing.] (7)

So, the gods told each other: ‘We ought to have affection for Bharat in our hearts and remember him with great reverence, because his virtues and goodness has had a such a profound influence upon Lord Ram that the Lord has declared his intention of abiding with Bharat’s wishes even if it means breaking his own vows to uphold the sanctity of his father’s words¹.’ (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 264 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it.]

दो०. सुनि सुर मत सुरगुर कहेउ भल तुम्हार बड़ भागु ।
सकल सुमंगल मूल जग भरत चरन अनुरागु ॥ २६५ ॥
dōhā.

sunī sura mata suragura kahē'u bhala tumhāra baṛa bhāgu.
sakala sumaṅgala mūla jaga bharata carana anurāgu. 265.

When the guru of the gods (i.e. sage Brihaspati) heard what the gods said, he was very glad, and replied: ‘Your decision is welcome; it is your extremely good fortune that you have decided to seek Bharat’s refuge in order to fulfill your wishes. Indeed, to have affection for Bharat and to pay respect at his feet is the root of all auspiciousness and good luck.

[So therefore, now that you have submitted yourselves before Bharat, rest assured that your objective of letting Lord Ram proceed to the forest to eliminate the demons would be successfully accomplished.]¹ (Doha no. 265)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 219; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 220.]

चौ०. सीतापति सेवक सेवकाई । कामधेनु सय सरिस सुहाई ॥ १ ॥
भरत भगति तुम्हरे मन आई । तजहु सोचु बिधि बात बनाई ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

sītāpati sēvaka sēvakāī. kāmadhēnu saya sarisa suhāī. 1.
bharata bhagati tumharēṁ mana āī. tajahu sōcu bidhi bāta banāī. 2.

[The guru of the gods continued to address them—] ‘Serving (sēvakāī) a servitor (“sēvaka”; a ‘devotee’) of Lord Ram (who is the Lord, or the husband, of Sita;

“sītāpati”) is as rewarding and pleasant an exercise as serving the mystical cow called ‘Kamdhenū’, the cow that can fulfill all the wishes of those who serve her. (1)

That you have now developed devotion for Bharat is a good thing for you, and now therefore you should stop worrying at all and be rest assured that Fate and Providence have ensured that the things would turn in your favour¹.’ (2)

[Note—¹Sage Brihaspati, the gods’ guru, said: “Listen, by submitting yourselves before Bharat, who is an ardent devotee of Lord Ram, you have done well, as it will ensure that your desires would surely be fulfilled*1. Had you not done so, the chances of your wishes being fulfilled—that Lord Ram continues with his journey to the forest to eliminate the demons—would have been doubtful, because Lord Ram would have found it extremely difficult to refuse to oblige Bharat, who, remember, is not only devoted to Lord Ram but loves him much more than any one of you*2. You all are driven by selfishness*3, but Bharat is selfless as is evident from the fact that he has refused to accept the crown when it was offered to him by his own guru, sage Vasistha*4, and the Lord would have certainly sided with him. Lord Ram has himself declared that he would always keep the wishes of his devotee above all other considerations*5, and that his devotee is far dearer to him than his own self*6.

But now since you have decided to leave your fate in the hands of Bharat himself, you are lucky as Bharat, being a noble, pious and holy soul, will feel it obligatory to not do anything that would harm the interest of others. So therefore, once he realizes that the fate of the gods is in his hands, and their interest would be best served if Lord Ram goes to the forest instead of returning home to Ayodhya, he would willingly sacrifice his own happiness so that those who have sought refuge with him and seek his help are kept happy, and that their wishes are upheld on and above his own wishes*7.”

*1 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 265.

*2 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 259.

*3 = Ram Charit Manas, (a) Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 12; (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 220; (iii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 295; (b) Lanka Kand, (iv) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 110.

*4 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 174—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 176; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 177—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 183.

*5 = Ram Charit Manas, (a) Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 219; (b) Uttar Kand, (ii) Doha no. 87-a.

*6 = Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 16.

*6 =The next two verses, Chaupai line nos. 3-4, go on to endorse the views stated herein above.}]

देखु देवपति भरत प्रभाऊ । सहज सुभायँ बिबस रघुराऊ ॥ ३ ॥

मन थिर करहु देव डरु नाही । भरतहि जानि राम परिछाहीं ॥ ४ ॥

dēkhu dēvapati bharata prabhā'ū. sahaja subhāyam' bibasa raghurā'ū. 3.
mana thira karahu dēva ḍaru nāhīm. bharatahi jāni rāma parichāhīm. 4.

[Then the guru turned to Indra, the king of the gods, and said to him—] “Oh the King of Gods (dēvapati)! Observe how excellent and immaculate the nature and character of Bharat is that he has successfully influenced Lord Ram so much that the Lord prefers to obey him and do as he (Bharat) wants¹. (3)

Now that you have decided to submit yourselves before Bharat and leave your fate in his hands, be happy and feel rest assured that you have nothing to worry and fear from anything any more—because you must realize that Bharat is like a shadow of Lord Ram (and therefore, like the shadow that always follow a person and never goes in the opposite direction, Bharat too would always do what Lord Ram wishes to do himself, and he would never defy the Lord's wish)². (4)

[Note—¹This fact is endorsed in the following verses of Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand: (i) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 205 (deity of Triveni); (ii) Chaupai line nos. 3-6 that precede Doha no. 208 (sage Bharadwaj); (iii) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 258 (sage Vasistha); (iv) Chaupai line nos. 2 and 8 that precede Doha no. 259 (Lord Ram).

²Put simply it means that Bharat would always follow Lord Ram's wishes, and never go against it, just like a shadow silently follows a man, and never goes in the opposite direction.

Since Lord Ram's wish is to go to the forest so that the scourge of the demons is eliminated, as this was the very reason why the Supreme Being had come down to earth in the form of Lord Ram*1, it is sure that Bharat won't stand in the way to stop the Lord from doing it.

{*1 = Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 187; (b) Aranya Kand, (ii) Doha no. 9 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede it.}]

सुनि सुरगुर सुर संमत सोचू । अंतरजामी प्रभुहि सकोचू ॥ ५ ॥

निज सिर भारु भरत जियँ जाना । करत कोटि बिधि उर अनुमाना ॥ ६ ॥

sunī suragura sura sammata sōcū. antarajāmī prabhuhi sakōcū. 5.
nija sira bhāru bharata jiyam' jānā. karata kōṭi bidhi ura anumānā. 6.

Hearing the conversation between the gods and their guru, and learning what they concluded at the end of their conference (as described in the forgoing verses), Lord Ram, who knows the inner thoughts of everyone (antarajāmī prabhuhi)¹, became very pensive and uncomfortable². (5)

Meanwhile, Bharat too realized the gravity of the situation, as well as the fact that a huge burden has been cast on his head (i.e. a great responsibility has devolved on him, putting his mind is a churn).

He began silently to contemplate and weigh all the pros and cons, all the possibilities and scenarios that he could think of in his mind.³ (6)

[Note—¹Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 66 (Laxman); (ii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 72; (iii) Doha no. 201 (Nishad to Bharat); (iv) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 211; (v) Doha no. 256; (vi) Doha no. 257; (vii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 267; (viii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 298; (b) Aranya Kand, (ix) Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 6 (sage Atri); (x) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 9 (all the sages when Lord Ram asked them about the heap of bones he saw along the road to the forest); (xi) Chaupai line no. 19 that precedes Doha no. 11 (sage Sutikshan); (xii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 39 (Lord Shiva to Uma, his consort); (xiii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 42; (c) Sundar Kand, (xiv) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 49 (Vibhishan); (d) Uttar Kand, (xv) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 36 (Lord Ram knows the inner thoughts of all living being).

²Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 264. As we have read in these verses earlier, Lord Ram was in a fix, not being able to decide what to and what not to do, as he had to balance the wishes of his father king Dasrath, his guru sage Vasistha, and Bharat. Now, added to the list of those whose wishes the Lord had to consider were the 'gods'.

Obviously the Lord was perplexed, wondering whom to oblige and whom not to.

³Bharat was caught in a vice-like grip symbolizing a grave dilemma. Earlier he had thought that he would have his own way as he knew how much Lord Ram loved him*1, and how it would be virtually impossible for the Lord not to oblige him after their guru too had advised the Lord to pay attention to what Bharat wants*2.

But the situation has changed drastically now—for Bharat now had to consider two important things: one was not to put Lord Ram in a situation where the Lord finds himself embarrassed to be forced to break the words he had given to his father that he would willingly live in the forest for fourteen years if it pleases him*3, and the other was the decision of the gods to depend upon Bharat to fulfill their wish that Lord Ram does not return home but continues his journey to the forest so that the demons are eliminated*4.

{*1 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 183; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 234.

*2 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 258 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it; (ii) Doha no. 259.

*3 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 41—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 42; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 46; (iii) Doha no. 88 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it; and (iv) Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 264.

*4 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 11.}]

करि बिचारु मन दीन्ही ठीका । राम रजायस आपन नीका ॥ ७ ॥

निज पन तजि राखेउ पनु मोरा । छोहु सनेहु कीन्ह नहिं थोरा ॥ ८ ॥

kari bicāru mana dīnhī ṭhikā. rāma rajāyasa āpana nīkā. 7.
nija pana taji rākhē'u panu mōrā. chōhu sanēhu kīnha nahim thōrā. 8.

After thoroughly analyzing the situation and taking into account the seriousness of the issue at hand, Bharat prudently decided in his heart that his best interests and welfare lay in obeying whatever Lord Ram tells him to do¹. (7)

The very fact that the Lord preferred to set aside his own vows (to honour his father's words and stay in the forest for fourteen years) in order to keep my wishes² is nothing short of showing great honour to me, and so it is enough as far as I am concerned, for it proves how much the Lord loves me.³ (8)

[Note—¹In this context, refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 254 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it.

In the above cited verses it has been clearly said that one would do best for one's own self if he or she follows what Lord Ram wants to be done, instead of arguing and compelling the Lord to do what he or she wants to be done. It is because the Lord knows what is good for his devotees, and what is not.

²Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-8 and that precede Doha no. 259.

³The three important lessons that this episode teaches us are: (i) We must submit ourselves to the Lord and let him take care of our fate, as this approach frees us from a heavy burden of constant worries and feeling of uneasiness; (ii) The Lord loves his devotees so much that he would rather break his own vows to satisfy the wishes of his devotees; (iii) The Lord knows far better what is in our interests, and what would serve us well, as compared to ourselves deciding on the matter, because our minds have a limited understanding and it cannot see into the future.]

दो०. कीन्ह अनुग्रह अमित अति सब बिधि सीतानाथ ।
करि प्रनामु बोले भरतु जोरि जलज जुग हाथ ॥ २६६ ॥
dōhā.

kīnha anugraha amita ati saba bidhi sītānātha.
kari pranāmu bōlē bharatu jōri jalaja juga hātha. 266.

Realising how immense is Lord Ram's love for him, how much the Lord has been graceful towards him, and how it is impossible for him to measure it, for which he felt exceedingly obliged and grateful, Bharat finally submitted himself before the Lord and said prayerfully by joining the palms of his lotus-like hands. [What Bharat said follows in the verses herein below.] (Doha no. 266)

चौ०. कहौं कहावौं का अब स्वामी । कृपा अंबुनिधि अंतरजामी ॥ १ ॥
गुर प्रसन्न साहिब अनुकूला । मिटी मलिन मन कलपित सूला ॥ २ ॥
अपडर डरेउँ न सोच समूलें । रबिहि न दोसु देव दिसि भूलें ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

kahaurṁ kahāvaurṁ kā aba svāmī. kṛpā ambunidhi antarajāmī. 1.
gura prasanna sāhiba anukūlā. miṭī malina mana kalapita sūlā. 2.
apaḍara ḍarē'umṁ na sōca samūlēm. rabihi na dōsu dēva disi bhūlēm. 3.

Bharat submitted most humbly before Lord Ram: ‘Oh my Lord (svāmī)! What can I say anymore, and what can I expect others to say on my behalf. Thou art an ocean of mercy, compassion, kindness and grace (kṛpā ambunidhi), and nothing is a secret from thee as thou art all-knowing as well (antarajāmī)¹. (1)

My guru (sage Vasistha) is favourable towards me², and so is my Lord (Ram)³. What more would I want; what more would I expect?

This is indeed a rare honour and a privilege for me to have both the Guru and the Lord show so much affection to me, and this has removed my grief, the feeling of sadness and despondency that had clouded my mind and heart, as well as the imaginary sense of regret and remorse from which I had been suffering. [I don’t want anything else; I am fully contented and peacefull in my heart; my conscience is at rest now.] (2)

I was unnecessarily worried and afraid (that after all the evil developments, your affection and love for me had been compromised, as it was natural under the circumstances for you to think that I am guilty for all that had happened); there was no ground why I should have had so much regret and fear ignominy for no fault of mine.

I was mistaken and lost my bearings⁴ just like a man losing his way when he is highly upset emotionally and his mind does not work properly, and then he accuses the sun for misleading him.⁵ (3)

[Note—¹Bharat means to say that since Lord Ram knows everything, being ‘all-knowing’*1, there is no purpose served by saying anything that the Lord already knows. And since he is full of compassion and kindness, it naturally follows that he would never be harsh against Bharat. {*1 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha nos. 256, 257.

²Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precedes Doha no. 257; (ii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 258—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 259.

³Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 231—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 232; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 2, 4-8 that precede Doha no. 260.

⁴There were two main reasons why Bharat was feeling so sad and remorseful. One was that though he had no hand in the evil scheme hatched by his wicked mother Kaikeyi, whereby Lord Ram was sent to the forest for fourteen years, with Laxman and Sita following him, and which led to the death of king Dasrath, but nevertheless he was held to be the primary suspect obviously because it was he who was to be the beneficiary of the whole scheme, as he was to be given the crown of Ayodhya once

Lord Ram is out of the way. This naturally burdened him with ignominy and taint for life.

The other reason is that he loved Lord Ram very dearly, and the Lord too loved him equally dearly since their childhood days. But the nasty development of recent past had created a rift and caused a crack to appear in this otherwise perfect, inviolable and solid relationship marked by affection and love that existed between two loving brothers.

But as it turned out eventually, Bharat discovered that he was mistaken, because both his guru, sage Vasistha, and dear brother, Lord Ram, loved and respected him with as much warmth and sincerity now as they had been doing since the beginning. Had they harboured any doubt about his integrity, honesty and truthfulness, it is obvious that their attitude towards him would have been different.

This realization was very reassuring and soothing for Bharat's heart and mind; his conscience was at rest; his overriding sense of guilt and shame was put to rest; his fears that his dear brother Lord Ram, whom he loved and revered so much, has become angry with him were dispelled. Bharat's agitations and emotional upheaval calmed down. His soul was at peace with him.

Bharat says that he was wrong to think that Lord Ram was annoyed with him and thinks that Bharat was guilty of betrayal and selfishness. Now he realizes how great and strong was the bond of love and affection that existed in the heart of Lord Ram for him.

⁵Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Uttarakand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 73.

In olden days, travellers used the sun to set their course, and determine direction and time. By seeing the point on the horizon where the sun rose in the morning, and by following its course through the sky during the day till it set in the west in the evening, the wayfarers could determine the direction of their travel as well as the time of the day. But it often happened that due to a host of reasons these travellers lost their way and sense of direction; it would not be proper for them to blame the sun for misleading them because their loss of direction was due to factors other than the sun, for the sun never changed either its time of rising and setting, or its course through the sky.

A similar idea of a man getting lost and losing his sense of direction and bearing due to doubts, confusions and delusions is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Uttarakand, Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 73.]

मोर अभागु मातु कुटिलाई । बिधि गति बिषम काल कठिनाई ॥ ४ ॥

पाउ रोपि सब मिलि मोहि घाला । प्रनतपाल पन आपन पाला ॥ ५ ॥

mōra abhāgu mātu kuṭilā'ī. bidhi gati biṣama kāla kaṭhinā'ī. 4.
pā'u rōpi saba mili mōhi ghālā. pranatapāla pana āpana pālā. 5.

Four factors, such as my misfortunes and bad luck (mōra abhāgu); the wickedness and perversity of my mother (mātu kuṭilā'ī); the will of the Creator who was unfavourably inclined towards me (bidhi gati biṣama); and the cruel fiat of Fate that made the tide of time hostile towards me (kāla kaṭhinā'ī), had worked against me. (4)

These four had worked in tandem and joined their hands together to conspire against me to ruin my fate and cause immense heartburn for me.

But oh Lord, your merciful and kind nature which obliges you to offer refuge to those who come to surrender before you¹, has saved the day for me as it has given me succour and hope of salvation. (5)

[Note—¹This virtue of Lord Ram is reiterated elsewhere also in Ram Charit Manas—apropos: Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 43—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 44 (with respect to Vibhishan, the brother of the demon king Ravana, who had come to surrender before Lord Ram and seek the Lord's protection).]

यह नइ रीति न राउरि होई । लोकहुँ बेद बिदित नहिं गोई ॥ ६ ॥
जगु अनभल भल एकु गोसाई । कहिअ होइ भल कासु भलाई ॥ ७ ॥
देउ देवतरु सरिस सुभाऊ । सनमुख बिमुख न काहुहि काऊ ॥ ८ ॥

yaha na'i rīti na rā'uri hō'ī. lōkahum' bēda bidita nahim gō'ī. 6.
jagu anabhala bhala ēku gōsā'īm. kahi'a hō'i bhala kāsū bhalā'īm. 7.
dē'u dēvataru sarisa subhā'ū. sanamukha bimukha na kāhuhi kā'ū. 8.

This nature and habit of yours (that you give hope, succour and salvation to those who come to seek refuge with you) is well known and established in the world. It is well documented in the Vedas (ancient scriptures) as well; it is nothing that is secret or little known, for it is in the public domain¹. (6)

Truly indeed, even if the whole world becomes hostile to a person but you are favourable to him, say what harm can come to such a person? Who can cause injury to a person upon whom you are merciful and kind? (7)

My Lord, you are like the heavenly tree of the gods that grants all wishes. It is willing to fulfill a person's righteous wishes, but thinks of harming none². (8)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 183; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 200; (b) Sundar Kand, (iii) Doha no. 45; (c) Lanka Kand, (iv) Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 44.

²The tree of the gods is known as the “Kalpa Taru”. It is reputed to grant all the wishes that a person makes to it, but it is subject to the condition that such wish does not harm anyone. Similarly, Lord Ram grants all the wishes of his devotees, subject to the condition that such wishes are not aimed against anyone, to cause harm or pain to others.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 43—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 44.]

दो०. जाइ निकट पहिचानि तरु छाहँ समनि सब सोच ।

मागत अभिमत पाव जग राउ रंकु भल पोच ॥ २६७ ॥

dōhā.

jā'i nikāṭa pahicāni taru chāham̐ samani saba sōca.
māgata abhimata pāva jaga rā'u raṅku bhala pōca. 267.

[Comparing Lord Ram to the all wish-fulfilling Tree of the gods in heaven, Bharat continued—]

‘When one goes to the Tree of the gods in heaven (known as the Kalpa Taru) with full awareness of (or after recognizing and being convinced of) its mystical qualities and excellent virtues (i.e. that it can fulfill a person’s wishes), and seeks shelter under its shade, then all his torments and sufferings are automatically dispelled.

The whole world asks and gets its wishes fulfilled by this Tree, irrespective of who the person is, whether he is a king or a pauper, whether he is a good person or an evil one, everyone’s wish is fulfilled by this divine Tree.¹ (Doha no. 267)

[Note—¹A person who is suffering from heat of the sun goes to a tree with a wide circle of shade around it to get relief. As soon as he reaches the shadow of the tree, he feels comfortable and happy. All the torments and suffering inflicted on him by the scorching sun are immediately dispelled. This comes automatically, without asking, as it is in the nature of a tree to provide shade and comfort to all those who come to seek shelter under it, irrespective of who that person is. The tree would give shade to a king as much as to a pauper, and likewise a wicked man finds comfort under its shade as much as does a good man.

But the ‘tree’ that is being referred to here is no ordinary tree, but one possessed with mystical powers that enables it to fulfill all the wishes of those who approach it with this purpose in mind. Hence, the great comfort an ordinary tree’s cool shade automatically provides to a weary traveller suffering from the heat of the sun as soon as he reaches the tree, is employed here to mean that as soon as a person approaches the Kalpa Taru, all his sufferings and wants end as all his desires are met automatically, without him even asking for them to be fulfilled specifically.

This verse is an extension of verse no. 8 herein above where Bharat has compared Lord Ram to the mystical ‘tree of the gods’, known as the ‘Kalpa Taru’, that is famous for its gracious nature and magical ability to fulfill the wish of anyone who comes to it to ask for anything. This ‘tree’ never turns anyone away; it gives liberally without any kind of distinction between two persons. It does not treat a king with any more favour than it treats a pauper.

The idea behind this metaphor is simple: Like the Kalpa Taru that fulfills the desires of all those who ask for anything from it, Lord Ram too is very obliging and liberal in his grant of largesse in the form of fulfilling the wish of his devotees.

Bharat has cleverly hinted to Lord Ram that this being the case, and it being his famed reputation, he expects the Lord to fulfill his (Bharat’s) wish too, irrespective of the correctness or otherwise of his (Bharat’s) wish, or the consequences that would follow.

Having said this, Bharat however immediately realized that it was his moral duty not to cause any kind of embarrassment to Lord Ram; he ought not to compel the Lord to break any rule of law and probity just in order to fulfill Bharat’s wish, as it is not proper for a true devotee or a servant to put his Lord in an embarrassing situation by being stubborn and insistent that his desires be fulfilled at any cost. This mental

churn of Bharat, the piquant situation and the dilemma that he faced, and his ultimate decision not to compel Lord Ram to do anything against his own wish, as it would not be the correct thing for Bharat to do, will be clear shortly in verse nos. 2-7 that follow herein below after this Doha no. 267.]

चौ०. लखि सब बिधि गुर स्वामि सनेहू । मिटेउ छोभु नहिं मन संदेहू ॥ १ ॥
 अब करुनाकर कीजिअ सोई । जन हित प्रभु चित छोभु न होई ॥ २ ॥
 caupāī.

lakhi saba bidhi gura svāmi sanēhū. miṭē'u chōbhū nahim mana sandēhū. 1.
 aba karunākara kīji'a sōī. jana hita prabhu cita chōbhū na hōī. 2.

[Bharat continued—] ‘I have realized (seen, perceived) how much my guru (sage Vasistha) and my Lord (Ram) have immense love and affection for me¹, and this realization has removed all grief and remorse that had afflicted my heart and mind till now, causing immense sadness for me. I have no doubt in the regard any more. (1)

Now, therefore, oh Lord who shows mercy, kindness and compassion on others (karunākara), please be gracious to do that which does not cause any kind of embarrassment to you, that which does not make you feel perturbed or hesitant just for the sake of obliging me, who is but your obedient servant, and at the same time, that which would be for my good and ensures my best of interests. (2)

[Note—¹Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 257; (ii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 258—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 259 (sage Vasistha).

Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 231—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 232; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precede Doha no. 259 (Lord Ram).]

जो सेवकु साहिबहि सँकोची । निज हित चहइ तासु मति पोची ॥ ३ ॥
 सेवक हित साहिब सेवकाई । करै सकल सुख लोभ बिहाई ॥ ४ ॥

jō sēvaku sāhibahi samkōcī. nija hita caha'i tāsū mati pōcī. 3.
 sēvaka hita sāhiba sēvakāī. karai sakala sukha lōbha bihāī. 4.

If a servant puts his Lord in an embarrassing situation or creates a situation that would make his Lord perplexed and hesitant just in order to get his wishes fulfilled, then surely such a servant is most contemptible, and his mind most lowly and despicable¹. (3)

A servant's interest lies in serving his Lord with great diligence, honesty and loyalty; he should serve his Lord without bothering about his own conveniences, happiness or gain². (4)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 269 herein below.

²To wit, a good and praise-worthy servant is he who keeps the interest, happiness and comfort of his Master or Lord above everything else. The servant should take care that his Master or Lord is never subjected to any kind of hesitation, perplexity or embarrassment due to him. A good servant is one who never demands anything from him whom he serves. Whatever the Master or the Lord gives as a reward or gift or remuneration must be accepted by the servant with grace.]

स्वारथु नाथ फिरें सबही का । किऐँ रजाइ कोटि बिधि नीका ॥ ५ ॥

यह स्वारथ परमारथ सारू । सकल सुकृत फल सुगति सिंगारू ॥ ६ ॥

svārathu nātha phirēm sabahī kā. ki'ēm'rajā'i kōṭi bidhi nīkā. 5.
yaha svāratha paramāratha sārū. sakala sukr̥ta phala sugati siṅgārū. 6.

Oh Lord, everyone's interest lies in your returning home to Ayodhya, but at the same time obeying your orders would be millions of times good and most welcome by everyone as it would be the right thing to do for all. (5)

This in brief is the essence of every option that is available before us, for doing as aforesaid would serve the interest of everyone, both in terms of the temporal world as well as the spiritual world; it would be the best and the most auspicious thing to do.¹
(6)

[Note—¹Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 266 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it.

Refer also to a similar advice that Lord Ram gives in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 16; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 43.]

देव एक बिनती सुनि मोरी । उचित होइ तस करब बहोरी ॥ ७ ॥

तिलक समाजु साजि सबु आना । करिअ सुफल प्रभु जौं मनु माना ॥ ८ ॥

dēva ēka binatī suni mōrī. ucita hō'i tasa karaba bahōrī. 7.
tilaka samāju sāji sabu ānā. kari'a suphala prabhu jāum manu mānā. 8.

Bharat said to Lord Ram: 'Oh my revered Lord (dēva), please listen to one prayer of mine first, and then do whatever you deem to be appropriate in view of my submission, as well as after weighing in all other factors related to the matter. (7)

I have brought along with me all the necessary paraphernalia and accoutrements that are necessary for the ceremony to anoint you on the throne of the kingdom of Ayodhya¹.

Now Lord, if you think it proper and have no hesitation against it, then please be gracious enough to put them to use (i.e. if you think it is proper, then be kind to

make use of these things and allow us to anoint you as the king of the kingdom right now, here itself)². (8)

[Note—¹What was the most important component amongst all the things that were needed for such anointment ceremony? It was a collection holy waters and herbs that were gathered from different religious places. All such samples of waters were collected in a pot to which all the herbs were added, and then this mixture was sprinkled on the king-to-be to the accompaniment of chanting of holy Mantras and recitation of hymns from the scriptures.

In this context, refer to Ram Charit Manas, (a) Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 6; and (b) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 12.

As to the question ‘what happened to the mixture of the holy waters that were collected from different religious places and brought by Bharat for the anointment ceremony of Lord Ram in the forest itself’, we shall shortly find an answer in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 307—to Doha no. 310.

²We have already read earlier that at the time of departure from Ayodhya, Bharat had ordered that all necessary paraphernalia and accoutrements that were necessary for the ceremony to anoint Lord Ram on the throne be taken along, because his wish it to anoint the Lord without any delay, in the forest itself, without waiting for his return to the city for an elaborate and formal ceremony; it can be organized later on. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 187.}

Now, Bharat is carrying out the orders of guru Vasistha; the sage had asked Bharat to tell Lord Ram frankly, without hesitation or demurring a bit, whatever he wanted to say, whatever there was in his heart. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 259.}

That said, there were other factors that were worrying Bharat; he faced a piquant situation where his personal wish as well as the collective wish of the citizens*1 clashed head-on with the wish of the gods, for the latter wanted Lord Ram to continue with his journey to the forest with the objective of eliminating the scourge of the demons*2. Had the gods made their own efforts to stop Lord Ram from going to the forest against Bharat’s wish, then no matter how powerful they were, Bharat’s wish would have prevailed, and Lord Ram would obviously prefer to oblige Bharat*3 rather than the gods. But the big problem here was that now the gods had surrendered themselves before Bharat, and had left the fulfillment of their wish—which however was for the wider good of the world at large as the cruelty, the ferocity and the tyranny of the demons had reached a climax, and it was absolutely essential to control them—in the hands of Bharat*4.

Bharat had a great responsibility on his shoulders*5, because he was said to be the one who is responsible to take care of the welfare and well-being of all the creatures in this mortal world, and it is precisely for this reason that he was named “Bharat” by his guru at the time of his birth*6. So therefore, to protect the world was Bharat’s primary duty, responsibility and concern. Fourteen years was of no consequence when measured against the long period of time Lord Ram would rule the world once he became its King; it was merely a fraction of that time, and so it really did not matter.

What mattered more for Bharat was his fear that the mischief created by his mother Kaikeyi had created a wide rift between him and Lord Ram whom he revered

and loved more than anyone else*7, and his sentiments were reciprocated by the Lord in equal terms and measures*8. Bharat was confounded and worried as how to bridge the artificial gulf of misunderstanding his mother had created. But during the initial hours of his warm and affectionate meeting with Lord Ram, the way the Lord rushed forward to clasp him to his bosom*9, and his subsequent interaction with the Lord, this imaginary fear and doubt had been removed, and Bharat has openly acknowledged it as being the source of the greatest satisfaction for him*10.

Hence, Bharat decided to stop being stubborn, especially in the context of the gods' wish for the wider good of the world, and not to insist on anything that would cause vexation for Lord Ram and make him feel embarrassed as he would not be able to decide whose wish to fulfill, of the gods' or of Bharat.

So, Bharat wisely skirted the issue of bluntly telling Lord Ram that he wants the Lord to return home—as that would unravel the planning of the gods and would also go against the words of honour that the Lord had given to his father, king Dasrath*11, and instead requested the Lord to allow himself to be anointed on the throne of the kingdom as it would fulfill one of Bharat's wish, and at the same time allow the wish of the gods' to be fulfilled too.

As it turns out eventually, Lord Ram had politely declined to accept this offer of Bharat. What was the reason for Lord Ram declining to accept this option given by Bharat, though he has himself said that he will follow what Bharat tells him to do*12? Well, the answer is simple and straightforward—it is this: The Lord was bound by the words of honour he had given to his father, king Dasrath, that he would live in the forest in the habit of a hermit*13, and a hermit and a recluse are not expected to wear a crown of any kingdom on their heads. Being a torch-bearer of Dharma, an embodiment of the highest principles of probity, propriety, immaculacy of character, ethics and morality*14, it was obligatory for Lord Ram not to break established and well respected regulations, rules and laws, i.e. not to do anything that goes against established tradition of life as a hermit.

{*1 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 2 and 8 that precede Doha no. 183; (ii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 185; (iii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 187; and (iv) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 268.

*2 = Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 187; (b) Ayodhya Kand, (ii) Doha no. 11; (iii) Doha no. 217 along with Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes it; (iv) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 255.

*3 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precede Doha no. 259.

*4 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 265 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it.

*5 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 266.

*6 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 197.

*7 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 178 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it.

*8 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 231—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 232; (ii) Doha no. 300.

*9 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 240.

*10 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 267; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 268.

*11 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 53 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede it; (ii) Doha no. 88.

*12 = Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 264.

*13 = Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 88.

*14 = Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 257; (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 304.}

In the verses that follow herein below, it will be evident from what Bharat would say that he has come round to contend with the situation that Lord Ram would not return to Ayodhya at that point of time.]

दो०. सानुज पठइअ मोहि बन कीजिअ सबहि सनाथ ।

नतरु फेरिअहिं बंधु दोउ नाथ चलोँ मैं साथ ॥ २६८ ॥

dōhā.

sānuja paṭha'i'a mōhi bana kīji'a sabahi sanātha.

nataru phēri'ahim bandhu dō'u nātha calaurṁ maim sātha. 268.

[Then Bharat made his second submission before Lord Ram—] ‘Lord, send me and my younger brother (Shatrughan) to the forest, as it would please everyone¹.

In case it is not possible for you to do so (and you insist that you have to go to the forest yourself in order to fulfill your obligations to the gods and to our father), then please send the two younger brothers (i.e. Laxman and Shatrughan) back home and I myself will accompany you to the forest². (Doha no. 268)

[Note—¹This proposal of Bharat was in line with what sage Vasistha had asked him to do—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 256.

²This second option was Bharat’s own initiative. He knew by instinct that the chances of the first option being accepted by Lord Ram were extremely thin, but the second option might be acceptable to him, as now the Lord would be able to continue with his mission, with the only difference being that Laxman would be replaced by Bharat.

But there was a subtle catch here which Bharat did not realize. It was this: Laxman’s mother had willingly ordered her son to accompany Lord Ram to the forest; she had ordered him to serve Lord Ram and Sita like his parents; she had also ordered him to stay in the forest because he has no work or reason to stay in Ayodhya while the Lord lives in the forest. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precede Doha no. 74; (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 and Chanda line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 75.}

Now, obeying one’s mother was more important than obeying the father. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 56.} Hence, Laxman was bound by his mother’s orders to live in the forest and serve Lord Ram and Sita, and as long as the Lord lived in the forest, Laxman was under obligation to stay with him, and not return home.

Bharat's situation was just the opposite. First, he was supposed to get the crown of Ayodhya under the same set of conditions which led Lord Ram to the forest*1. And second, his mother had never asked him to go to the forest and serve Lord Ram as Laxman's mother had done. So therefore, Bharat would violate both the conditions if he went to the forest with Lord Ram, but this aspect did not occur to him, and this is why Lord Ram could not accept his proposal. {*1 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 29.}}

चौ०. नतरु जाहिं बन तीनिउ भाई । बहुरिअ सीय सहित रघुराई ॥ १ ॥
जेहि बिधि प्रभु प्रसन्न मन होई । करुना सागर कीजिअ सोई ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

nataru jāhiṁ bana tīni'u bhāī. bahuri'a sīya sahita raghurāī. 1.
jēhi bidhi prabhu prasanna mana hōī. karunā sāgara kīji'a sōī. 2.

[Bharat continued—] 'Another alternative is that we three brothers (i.e. myself, Shatrughan and Laxman) would go to the forest, and in exchange of it Lord Ram and Sita would go back home'¹. (1)

Oh Lord, thou art an ocean of mercy and compassion (prabhu -- karunā sāgara)! Out of these different proposals or options that are available, you can choose to do any one which pleases you and makes you happy, as well as is appropriate for the occasion². (2)

[Note—¹This is the fourth option that Bharat gave Lord Ram (the other three have been mentioned in the previous verses)—i.e. the Lord should return to Ayodhya, and in his place all his three brothers will go to the forest. Little did Bharat realize that out of the four proposals that he has made, this was the worse, and certainly not to be accepted by the Lord.

What was so bad with this fourth proposal? Well, come to think of it, had Lord Ram accepted this option and returned home while his other three brothers went to the forest in his stead, what would it mean, and how would the world react to it? It would certainly portray Lord Ram as being very selfish, pervert, greedy for the crown, and revengeful. The world would say that Lord Ram accepted this option to settle scores with Kaikeyi and her son Bharat by sending the latter to the forest along with his younger brother Shatrughan, and secretly told Laxman to keep a close watch on them so that they go away from Ayodhya as much as it was possible, and later on when the time came to return home, Laxman should devise a device by which they are prevented from coming back. Meanwhile, the skeptical world would invariably say behind Lord Ram's back that he has returned to the city to grab the throne and concentrate all powers in his hands, and by-and-by put Kaikeyi to immense sufferings, even imprisoning her, and deftly ensuring that her son Bharat never returns home to challenge the Lord.

Besides this, Lord Ram would be committing the great error of disobeying his father, king Dasrath, on two counts. The king had ordered Lord Ram alone to go to the forest, and none of the other three sons. Hence, if Lord Ram returned to Ayodhya, it would be a double-edged sin as it would entail breaking the words of his father on two counts—one, to abandon living in the forest for the next fourteen years and return

home much before that period ends; and two, to send Bharat to the forest while the father and his mother Kaikeyi wanted him to be crowned as the next king.

There is one other very important reason why Lord Ram could not return home now; it is this: There were countless sages, hermits, ascetics and devotees of the Lord who had been living a reclusive life in the forest, spending their time in doing penances, observing austerities, doing meditation and contemplation, keeping religious vows such as observing fast and silence, and so on and so forth with the objective of spiritual welfare and salvation. Many had been living with the hope of meeting meet Lord Ram one day so that their spiritual practices can be rewarded, and they can attain bliss, deliverance and emancipation by the grace of the Lord. One such sterling example is of the old lady named Sabari (or Shabri) whom her mentor, sage Matang, had advised to wait in her hermitage patiently as one day Lord Ram would visit her to provide her deliverance and salvation. {This fact has been specifically mentioned in Veda Vyas' "Adhyatma Ramayan", Aranya Kand, Canto 10, verse nos. 10-19; 41-41.}

Sabari's was a specific case that has been cited here, but like her countless other souls, from great sages right upto humble tribals such as the Kols, Bhils and the Kirats, from the gods in the heaven to the mountains, rivers and animals on earth, had benefited by having had the good fortune of seeing and worshipping Lord Ram, a human form of the Supreme Being himself, personally, and from close quarters; they had talked with the Lord, walked alongside him, and derived immense bliss and happiness by this direct communion with the Supreme Being*1. We read that sage Valmiki had asked Lord Ram to proceed to the forest so that numerous sages, ascetics and hermits living there could be blessed by the Lord's presence amidst them*2. Even ordinary and humble creatures like the birds and animals, the trees and the ground below, the mountains and the rivers, the villagers and the travellers—et al reveled and felt joyous with their communion with Lord Ram*3.

{*1 = Ram Charit Manas, (a) Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precede Doha no. 134—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precede Doha no. 137; (b) Aranya Kand, (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 9; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 14;

*2 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 132.

*3 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 110; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 113; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 114; (iv) Doha no. 122 along with Chaupai line nos. 1, 6 that precede it; (v) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 123—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 124.}

The underlying idea is that had Lord Ram returned home to Ayodhya instead of proceeding to the forest, numerous souls and humble creatures, both the animate as well as the inanimate components of this world, would have been deprived of the spiritual bliss and happiness, the sense of fulfillment and contentedness, the joy of being blessed by the Supreme Being himself, that they were fortunate enough to have had.

²We will remark here that while addressing Lord Ram, Bharat has used the epithet 'karunā sāgara' for the Lord. Well, his intention is obvious—he wanted to tell Lord Ram that while arriving at a decision he must remember his famed reputation of being an 'ocean of mercy, compassion, kindness, benevolence and grace', and therefore he must factor in Bharat's good and his emotions while deciding on anything. Bharat

hinted to the Lord that though his decision will be binding on all, including Bharat himself, yet the Lord is expected to not be harsh on him and keep his happiness in mind.

So we see here that Bharat has played his cards, so to say, very wisely, leaving the final decision on Lord Ram, yet reminding the Lord to be careful while choosing a particular line of action.

He leaves it upon the Lord to decide whether he would prefer to go on to the forest to fulfill his obligations to the gods and his father, or if he would like to return to Ayodhya to oblige Bharat and the citizens who all want him back.

This approach would ensure that the Lord is not embarrassed for he will not be compelled to do anything under Bharat's pressure; the choice would be his and not Bharat's.

Bharat has already declared that the Lord's decision would be accepted by him—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 266. So, there was no problem to him regarding what the Lord decides to do.

Then, if Lord Ram's decision was to be accepted without question, why did Bharat make these proposals? He could simply have asked Lord Ram what he wanted to do, instead of telling the Lord what were the options open to him. The answer is this: Sage Vasistha had ordered Bharat to tell Lord Ram frankly and freely what he had in his mind and heart, without holding back anything*1, but at the same time the sage had also asked Lord Ram to do what is fit and proper after hearing Bharat's submission*2. Hence, Bharat was simply carrying out the orders of his guru. {Refer to: *1 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 259; *2 = Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 258.}]

देवँ दीन्ह सबु मोहि अभारू । मोरें नीति न धरम बिचारू ॥ ३ ॥

कहउँ बचन सब स्वारथ हेतू । रहत न आरत केँ चित चेतू ॥ ४ ॥

dēvam' dīnha sabu mōhi abhārū. mōrēm nīti na dharama bicārū. 3.
kaha'um' bacana saba svāratha hētū. rahata na ārata kēm cita cētū. 4.

Oh Lord, you have put the entire burden of taking the final call and making a decision on my humble shoulders¹.

Well, I am neither well versed in principles of jurisprudence that are related to matters of such gravity, nor am I therefore competent to pass judgments and take decisions on such serious matters². (3)

Whatever I have said³ are motivated by my thoughts that are centered around my own limited goals which I perceive are for my good and would serve my own interest.

The reason is that when a person is in dire straits, when he is emotionally and mentally highly upset, he is unable to think, speak and act wisely and coherently; everything he does is awkward.

[To wit, please excuse me for having the impertinence and the temerity of speaking before thee and making bold proposals, without considering that such an act of mine would put thee in a fix, because by making specific proposals I have limited thy choice. But I am so upset and under stress, both mental and emotional, that I can't think and act properly. Hence, oh merciful Lord, overlook my words as I ought to be

pardoned by thee. See, thou art free to make a decision that thou thinkest fit, and I shalt be most happy to obey thine commands.] (4)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 3 and 8 that precede Doha no. 259; (ii) Doha no. 264 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it.

²This submission of Bharat shows how simple, humble and unpretentious he was. Further, he has deftly deflected the possibility of Lord Ram feeling vexed for undermining Bharat's emotions by taking any decision unilaterally without taking Bharat into confidence. With his statement Bharat has clearly indicated that in such serious matters of gravity and long time consequences, he is not fit and competent to take decisions. So therefore, it is best that the decision be left in the hands of Lord Ram, and whatever the Lord decides is acceptable to him.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 268—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 269.]

उतरु देइ सुनि स्वामि रजाई । सो सेवकु लखि लाज लजाई ॥ ५ ॥
अस मैं अवगुन उदधि अगाधू । स्वामि सनेहँ सराहत साधू ॥ ६ ॥

utaru dē'i suni svāmi rajā'ī. sō sēvaku lakhi lāja lajā'ī. 5.
asa mair̥m avaguna udadhi agādhū. svāmi sanēham' sarāhata sād̥hū. 6.

A servant who questions the wisdom and the rationale of the instructions that his master or lord has given him after hearing it, commits a grave error of impudence and a de-facto disobedience that are so great and unpardonable that even 'Shame' itself would be ashamed of such a person¹.

[To wit, a true and loyal servant is one who does not frown at, who does not show dislike or express reluctance to carry out the orders of his master or lord. Asking for clarity on some specific matter so that the orders are carried out properly is different from questioning the propriety and the rationality behind the order itself.] (5)

[Showing immense modesty and courteousness, Bharat says—] I am nothing but an ocean of all the faults and shortcomings one can imagine of, but it is out of his love for me² that my Lord has preferred to overlook them and call me a pious and saintly soul³.

[And so for this graciousness of the Lord, I am extremely obliged and highly grateful to him.] (6)

[Note—¹With this statement Bharat has made it clear that he has no intention to defy Lord Ram's instructions; whatever the Lord orders him to do will be accepted by him without asking questions.

In this context, refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 254 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it; (ii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 266; (iii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 298; (iv) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 307.

²Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 260.

³Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 259.]

अब कृपाल मोहि सो मत भावा । सकुच स्वामि मन जाइँ न पावा ॥ ७ ॥
प्रभु पद सपथ कहउँ सति भाऊ । जग मंगल हित एक उपाऊ ॥ ८ ॥

aba kṛpāla mōhi sō mata bhāvā. sakuca svāmi mana jā'im̐ na pāvā. 7.
prabhu pada sapatha kaha'um̐ sati bhā'ū. jaga maṅgala hita ēka upā'ū. 8.

Now oh merciful Lord (kṛpāla), it is my well considered view that whatever proposition that does not make you feel hesitant or awkward, that does not cause any kind perplexity or embarrassment to you, that does not put you in a dilemma¹, --- (7)

--- I say in all good faith and on oath by invoking the holiness of thy feet that it is the only way by which the good of the world can be taken care of.

[Hence, it would be the best thing for all of us to do, as it would be for the good not only of us but for the whole world as well. So therefore, whatever you order us to do we shall obey it willingly and cheerfully, for we know that your commands will always be for the good of the world at large.]² (8)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 268.

²Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 266.]

दो०. प्रभु प्रसन्न मन सकुच तजि जो जेहि आयसु देब ।
सो सिर धरि धरि करिहि सबु मिटिहि अनट अवरेब ॥ २६९ ॥
dōhā.

prabhu prasanna mana sakuca taji jō jēhi āyasu dēba.
sō sira dhari dhari karihi sabu miṭihi anaṭa avarēba. 269.

Bharat concluded his submission by saying, 'Oh Lord, whatever you freely choose to instruct us to do, with a cheerful heart and without having any kind of reservations or hesitation in your mind, verily indeed I declare that all of us, every individual amongst us, would obey thy commands with a bowed head and with the greatest of reverence to you.

In this way (by obeying your commands), all grounds of confusions, vexations, difficulties and consternations (that have worn us down and weighs heavily on the collective conscience of every one of us) would be done away with, and it will be a great relief for everyone.¹ # (Doha no. 269)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 294.

What Bharat declares here is in perfect sync with and conforms to what Lord Shiva has asserted in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 52, wherein he says that “whatever Lord Ram, in his primary form as the ‘Supreme Being’, had designed as the fate of an individual is bound to happen that way, and therefore it is futile to waste time and lose one’s peace of mind trying to go against it”.

Bharat says: “Oh Lord. Different people have different views and different priorities, and so it is difficult to reach a consensus. For instance, we all want to take you back home to Ayodhya, but the gods have a different view, for the latter want you to proceed to the forest*1.

Even amongst us, there are contradictory opinions—for instance, our guru sage Vasistha and our ministers want that I should ascend the throne*2, whereas the citizens are loathe to this idea, and they want you to return and ascend the throne*3. I am in a fix, so it is better and wiser to leave the decision in your able hands, for whatever you decide will be for the good of all*4.”

{*1 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 11 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it.

*2 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 174—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 176.

*3 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 184—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 185; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 280.

*4 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes this Doha no. 269 herein above.}

#This is the end of the first meeting between Lord Ram and Bharat at Chitrakoot, and it concluded without any decision being taken, except Bharat’s declaration that he is willing to go along with Lord Ram’s decision.]

चौ०. भरत बचन सुचि सुनि सुर हरषे । साधु सराहि सुमन सुर बरषे ॥ १ ॥

असमंजस बस अवध नेवासी । प्रमुदित मन तापस बनबासी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

bharata bacana suci suni sura haraṣē. sādhu sarāhi sumana sura baraṣē. 1.
asamanjasa basa avadha nēvāsī. pramudita mana tāpasa banabāsī. 2.

Hearing the words of Bharat, the gods felt very happy (because it essentially meant that Bharat will not insist on Lord Ram returning to Ayodhya, but would do as the Lord pleases, which obviously meant his willingness to let the Lord proceed to the forest as hoped by the gods).

The gods were so pleased at this development that they showered flowers on Bharat and hailed him as being a saintly soul (because Bharat had put the wider interest of the world above his own personal interests)¹. (1)

On the contrary, the citizens of Ayodhya were vexed and did not know how to react (because they were surprised at this sudden change in Bharat’s stance, for whereas he

had earlier shown his determination to take Lord Ram home, but now he has virtually backtracked and seemingly was ready to make a compromise on the issue)².

Meanwhile, those who lived in the forest, such as the many sages, ascetics and other saints who did penances and austerities in pursuit of their spiritual goals³, as well as the countless humble people such as the tribals known as the Kols, Kirats, Bhils etc. were very glad at this development (because now they will have more opportunity to freely interact with Lord Ram, and consequently derive more pleasure and blessedness, something they would have been deprived of had Bharat insisted in taking Lord Ram back to Ayodhya). (2)

[Note—¹Bharat's personal interest would have been served if Lord Ram returned to Ayodhya, as it was the very objective of Bharat when he decided to go all the way to Chitrakoot in the first place. But, being a saintly soul, Bharat ultimately decided to set aside his own interests for the sake of the larger good of the world—because the gods had wanted Lord Ram to go to the forest with the principle objective of eliminating the demons who had been tormenting the world and its innocent creatures. The other noble objective that would be served by the Lord going ahead with his mission to the forest would be to provide spiritual blessedness to countless souls who live there, and who would be benefited by their direct contact with the Lord.

The Lord's visit would give joy and fulfillment to both the animate creatures, including the numerous tribals, birds and animals who lived in the wilds, along with the sages and others who were engaged in spiritual practices, longing for salvation and emancipation, as well as the inanimate elements of creation such as the members of the plant kingdom, the mountains, the rivers, mother earth, and so on and so forth.

In this context, refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 112; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 132; (iii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 134—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 136.

²The ordinary citizens had sincerely longed to take Lord Ram back to Ayodhya, and they had undertaken the long and arduous journey to ensure it happened, and they could support Bharat in his effort to take Lord Ram home if the need so arises. But to their utter dismay, the situation suddenly changed, for Bharat has become soft on the issue of taking Lord Ram home; he has yielded ground and his earlier determination seems to have been lost. He has become pliant and seems to have lost his earlier confidence on the issue.

But what could these poor citizens do in the situation. It would be extremely outrageous for them to intervene in the matter as it would amount to indiscipline and tantamount to open defiance against the will of their own prince and king.

So, the citizens were crestfallen; their hopes were dashed. They became somber and remorseful. This is evident in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 301 along with Chanda line no. 4 that precedes it; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precede Doha no. 302; (iii) Doha no. 322 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede it.

³Some of them were also present in that conference. We have read earlier that during Lord Ram's stay at Chitrakoot, a steady stream of pious souls, such as the many sages, hermits, ascetics and those engaged in doing Tapa (penances) and Yoga (meditation) in the forest, used to come to meet Lord Ram in his hermitage, and they derived immense spiritual blissfulness by this interaction. {Refer to: Ram Charit

Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 134; (ii) Doha no. 237 along with Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precede it.}

So, when it became clear to such sages and saints that in all probability now, Lord Ram will stay in their midst instead of returning home to Ayodhya by being forced to oblige Bharat, this made them all exhilarant.]

चुपहिं रहे रघुनाथ सँकोची । प्रभु गति देखि सभा सब सोची ॥ ३ ॥
जनक दूत तेहि अवसर आए । मुनि बसिष्ठ सुनि बेगि बोलाए ॥ ४ ॥

cupahim rahē raghunātha samkōcī. prabhu gati dēkhi sabhā saba sōcī. 3.
janaka dūta tēhi avasara ā'ē. muni basiṣṭham suni bēgi bōlā'ē. 4.

Lord Ram, being of a compassionate and considerate nature, remained silent as he could not immediately decide how to respond to Bharat's suggestion¹.

Observing that the Lord was in a dilemma and was feeling vexed, the whole assembly was perturbed (as they not only stared at an uncertain future but also felt sad that their beloved Lord has been put to such a mental strain on their count). (3)

In the meanwhile, messengers of king Janak arrived². When sage was informed of their arrival, he ordered them to be brought in with all haste. (4)

[Note—¹Bharat has offered three options to Lord Ram*1, but unfortunately none could be accepted by the Lord because conceding to even one of them would violate other more important moral issues and laws of Dharma that the Lord had to consider. This point has been explained elaborately as notes appended to the relevant verses.

Sage Vasistha has said that everyone wants Lord Ram to be anointed as the next king of Ayodhya and return home*2. Bharat too has reiterated what the sage said, and told Lord Ram that he has brought all the necessary articles to anoint him as the king of Ayodhya with the hope that the Lord would oblige him by not letting them go to waste*3.

But at the same time both sage Vasistha and Bharat have said that the Lord's wish is supreme and would grant welfare to everyone, so all would gladly accept it*4.

{*1Refer = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 268 and Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it.

*2Refer = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 255.

*3Refer = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5 and 8 that precede Doha no. 268.

*Refer = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha nos. 254 and 269.}

This situation obviously made Lord Ram perplexed; he could not decide what to say and how to react immediately. On the one hand he felt that if he bluntly declined to accept Bharat's requests, it would break his heart as well as of everyone else. The Lord saw that every citizen was sad and distraught; grief and tensions arising out of uncertainty were writ large and clear on their faces. On the other hand, conceding to the demands of Bharat and the citizens— which were primarily two: one that the Lord agree to be anointed as the king of Ayodhya immediately, and two, that he would return home—would mean not only breaking the words of honour that the Lord had given to his father, that he would stay as a hermit in the forest for fourteen

years, but also spoil the grand plan to eliminate the demons as well as to grant spiritual bliss, deliverance and salvation to countless souls living in the forest and waiting for arrival of the Lord.

The reason for the Lord's perplexity and the cause of his dilemma was that since he was extremely compassionate, loving and kind by nature, he could not decide immediately whom to please and whom not to, for either way one group of souls was bound to be adversely affected by the Lord's decision. For instance, if he decides to return home and ascend the throne, it would definitely please Bharat and all other citizens of Ayodhya, except perhaps his step mother Kaikeyi, but surely the main objective of the Supreme Being assuming a human form as Lord Ram would be left unfulfilled. On the other hand, if the Lord continues with his journey to the forest, it would definitely fulfill this later objective, which was to eliminate the demons and free the world from their terror and cruelty, as well as to grant spiritual fulfillment to countless creatures living in the forest, but it would surely break the heart of Bharat and the citizens.

²When a pall of silence descended on the assembly and everyone sat with a lowered head, all of a sudden news arrived that some messengers of king Janak have arrived. It was like some god-sent much needed break that broke the gloomy silence and gave some breathing space to everyone so that those who were attending the conference and participating in the discussions would have some time to think over the matter and explore the different options that were on the table.

We shall read in the verses that follow that spies of king Janak had informed him about the developments in Ayodhya, and as soon as he learnt that Bharat has departed for Chitrakoot in an effort to ask forgiveness from Lord Ram and take him back home, Janak decided to go there himself and see how he can help in the matter.

Remember: After the death of king Dasrath, Janak was the senior-most person related to the royal family of Ayodhya, as he was the father of Sita and father-in-law of Lord Ram. His other daughter, Urmila, was married to Laxman. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 323 (Sita); and Chanda line nos. 8-10 that precede Doha no. 325.}

It appears that Providence itself had intervened at that time to provide some succour by creating a pause for some time so that everyone gets an opportunity to reflect upon the matter seriously and overcome the mental logjam that they are facing at present, so that some solution can be thrashed out for the vexed issue.

In such situations as is being narrated here, when one faces a logjam on an issue and no one can decide the matter, often times a little break and help from some third person, who is not directly involved or interested but is nevertheless wise and prudent enough to give good advice, to steer the dialogue forward in the correct direction, and bring the vexed issue to an acceptable solution, is most welcome. In our case, such a person turns out to be king Janak.]

करि प्रनाम तिन्ह रामु निहारे । बेषु देखि भए निपट दुखारे ॥ ५ ॥
दूतन्ह मुनिबर बूझी बाता । कहहु बिदेह भूप कुसलाता ॥ ६ ॥

kari pranāma tinha rāmu nihārē. bēṣu dēkhi bha'e nipaṭa dukhārē. 5.
dūtanha munibara būjhī bātā. kahahu bidēha bhūpa kusalātā. 6.

The messengers of king Janak first bowed their heads before the sage (Vasistha) and then looked intently at Lord Ram.

When they observed the Lord's attire of a hermit, they felt very sad and utterly dismayed¹. (5)

Meanwhile, the sage asked the messengers, 'Say, tell me how is everything with king Videha (i.e. king Janak who was also known by this name); please tell me about his welfare and how he is doing'. (6)

[Note—¹The last time any citizen of Janakpur, as the city of king Janak was known, had seen Lord Ram was as a lively and magnificent groom of Sita, the daughter of king Janak, looking exceptionally charming with his bewitching physical beauty and his attire of a royal prince, complete with ornaments and royal robes. Obviously, that picture was in stark contrast with the present form of Lord Ram in the habit of a hermit.

Hence, the sight of Lord Ram as a hermit living in a forest, instead of a prince attired in a magnificent way behoving his exalted stature, a great prince dressed in a way that creates a visible aura of majesty and splendour about him, was shocking for the messengers. They were speechless and appalled for a while at the sight they beheld.]

सुनि सकुचाइ नाइ महि माथा । बोले चर बर जोरें हाथा ॥ ७ ॥
बूझब राउर सादर साई । कुसल हेतु सो भयउ गोसाई ॥ ८ ॥

suni sakucā'i nā'i mahi māthā. bōlē cara bara jōrēm hāthā. 7.
būjhaba rā'ura sādara sā'īm. kusala hētu sō bhaya'u gōsā'īm. 8.

When the messengers heard what the sage had said, they felt embarrassed and disconcerted¹.

Recovering themselves and retrieving their composure, they bowed their heads before the sage, joined the palms of their individual hands, and replied courteously to him. (7)

'Oh Lord (rā'ura)! Your courteous enquiry about the king (Janak) and his welfare itself shows the great affection and respect you have for him, and therefore it is enough to ensure that everything would be fine with him.²' (8)

[Note—¹Why were the messengers so abashed when sage Vasistha asked them about king Janak's welfare? Well, we have just read that as soon as they presented themselves before the sage, then instead of talking with the sage and exchanging customary pleasantries with him, such as telling the sage that king Janak has sent greetings to him, their attention was immediately diverted towards Lord Ram, and what they saw made them so numbed that they stared at the Lord in a dazed and transfixed manner. {See verse no. 5 herein above.}

They were in a kind of stupor, forgetting for a moment the various courtesies and formalities they were supposed to show to all the other senior members present in the assembly. They were supposed to smile in a cheerful manner and bow to everyone present there as messengers are normally required to do. But instead of it, they

suddenly became gloomy and despondent as struck with frost. Their demeanours and sad expressions gave the impression that some grave calamity had struck their lord, i.e. king Janak, and that they have come to convey some seriously bad news.

So, instead of there being a stir caused by the unexpected and sudden arrival of these royal messengers in the otherwise sedate conference that was underway, like a stone that causes ripples when dropped in the calm waters of a lake, the behaviour of these messengers only added to the gloom and the heaviness of the atmosphere.

So, when sage Vasistha asked them how king Janak was, the messengers recovered themselves as if they woke up from a dream. This made them feel highly embarrassed.

²As soon as the messengers recovered their composure, they knew how to adequately respond to sage Vasistha's enquiry. Their answer was very polite and tactful, and said in a most graceful manner that reflected well on the high culture of their lord, king Janak. Their answer was indeed in accordance with the respectful, courteous and courtly manners messengers of kings were trained in, and were expected to put into practice when representing their king in some other king's court.

By their answer, the messengers have shown great reverence to sage Vasistha, as their answer meant that anyone who is lucky enough to be shown affection by the exalted sage, about whom the sage is concerned, then such a person can have nothing but welfare in his life. Even his misfortunes would transmew into good fortunes by the grace of the sage.]

दो०. नाहिं त कोसल नाथ के साथ कुसल गइ नाथ ।

मिथिला अवध बिसेष ते जगु सब भयउ अनाथ ॥ २७० ॥

dōhā.

nāhim ta kōsala nātha kēm sātha kusala ga'i nātha.

mithilā avadha bisēṣa tēm jagu saba bhaya'u anātha. 270.

[The messengers continued—] 'Had it not been for the courtesy of thy grace upon us all which ensured everybody's welfare and protected us like an umbrella, everything would have been in a state of ruin after the demise of the great king of Ayodhya (i.e. king Dasrath).

This calamity has affected the whole world which has lost a great sovereign (in the person of king Dasrath), but it has specially affected both the kingdoms of Ayodhya and Janakpur, and they have suffered equally.' (Doha no. 270)

[Note—King Dasrath was known as a 'Chakravarti King'—i.e. a king whose influence and dominion spread over a large area forming a gigantic geographical circle ("Chakra = circle"). He was actually an 'Emperor', and not merely a King of a particular kingdom; his writ extended far beyond the physical boundaries of Ayodhya. Even the gods welcomed him. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 98; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 173.}

Hence, with Dasrath's death, the world in general lost a great ruler, a great sovereign, but Ayodhya and Janakpur were more directly affected because of the matrimonial relationship between the royal families of these two kingdoms: King

Dasrath's four sons (Lord Ram, Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan) were married to the four princesses of Janakpur, the kingdom ruled by king Janak. Lord Ram and Laxman were married to the two daughters of king Janak (Sita and Urmila respectively), while Bharat and Shatrughan married the two daughters of Janak's brother named Kusketu (viz. Mandavi and Srutkirti respectively). {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda line nos. 1-16 that precede Doha no. 325.}]

चौ०. कोसलपति गति सुनि जनकौरा । भे सब लोक सोक बस बौरा ॥ १ ॥
जेहि देखे तेहि समय बिदेहू । नामु सत्य अस लाग न केहू ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kōsalapati gati suni janakaurā. bhē saba lōka sōka basa baurā. 1.
jēhiṁ dēkhē tēhi samaya bidēhū. nāmu satya asa lāga na kēhū. 2.

[The messengers of king Janak gave their report to sage Vasistha as follows—]

‘When king Janak as well as all his relations and the citizens of Janakpur heard of the fate of king of Kaushal (i.e. about the death of king Dasrath), a pall of gloom descended upon everyone as everyone became sad and benumbed with grief. (1)

Had anyone seen king Janak at that time, it would have been hard to believe that he is honoured by the title of ‘Videha’, i.e. someone who remains dispassionate and detached from the outside world, someone who remains calm and composed and unaffected by any kind of situation¹. (2)

[Note—¹To wit, the news of death of king Dasrath had so greatly upset king Janak that the latter lost his famed calmness and dispassionate attitude, a character that gave him the epithet of ‘Videha’. The word means ‘one whose body is not affected by external influences’; or ‘one who remains detached from the outside world so much so that external stimuli fail to evoke any kind of response from him’. So, when people observed how profoundly Janak was affected when he heard of the death of king Dasrath, they wondered if the epithet ‘Videha’ really was correctly applicable to him, because Janak’s behaviour seemed to be the opposite of what the word ‘Videha’ implies.

There is one other occasion when Janak had been so profoundly moved emotionally that it looked as if the epithet of ‘Videha’ was wrongly applied to him. It was the occasion of his first meeting with Lord Ram at Janakpur where the Lord had gone with sage Vishwamitra to attend the bow-breaking ceremony organized by the king. The first sight of Lord Ram mesmerized the great king so much that for a while he lost awareness of himself. Janak had himself acknowledged how greatly he was affected by seeing Lord Ram. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 215—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 216.]

रानि कुचालि सुनत नरपालहि । सूझ न कछु जस मनि बिनु ब्यालहि ॥ ३ ॥
भरत राज रघुबर बनबासू । भा मिथिलेसहि हृदयँ हराँसू ॥ ४ ॥

rāni kucāli sunata narapālahi. sūjha na kachu jasa mani binu byālahi. 3.
bharata rāja raghubara banabāsū. bhā mithilēsahi hr̥dayam̐ harāmśū. 4.

When he (Janak) heard of the queen's (i.e. Kaikeyi's) wicked deeds, he was confounded and stunned, not knowing how to react to this unprecedented development. His condition was so distraught and hopeless at that time that it reminded one of a serpent who had lost its 'Mani'¹. (3)

To aggravate matters further, he learnt that Bharat was given the crown of the kingdom (of Ayodhya), and his elder brother, Lord Ram (who was the rightful heir to the throne) was banished to the forest.

This news caused immense heartburn to Janak, and it added fuel to the fire of agitation that was already causing great torment to the king. (4)

[Note—¹The word 'Mani' means a gem. A special category of serpents carry a transparent sac on their hoods; this sac is filled with some kind of a glowing viscous secretion that oozes out from the glands present in the skin of the reptile. It is believed that the serpent comes out of its hole in the night to scout for food, and the light emanating from this sac enables it to see its surrounding area. If the sac is removed, the serpent becomes virtually blind, and dies of hunger.

Hence, removal of the sac makes the serpent extremely agitated and distraught as it faces certain death due to starvation.

This analogy is used to indicate that king Janak was extremely upset no sooner than the news of king Dasrath's death had arrived.]

नृप बूझे बुध सचिव समाजू । कहहु बिचारि उचित का आजू ॥ ५ ॥

समुझि अवध असमंजस दोऊ । चलिअ कि रहिअ न कह कछु कोऊ ॥ ६ ॥

nr̥pa būjhē budha saciva samājū. kahahu bicāri ucita kā ājū. 5.
samujhi avadha asamanjasa dō'ū. cali'a ki rahi'a na kaha kachu kō'ū. 6.

The king (Janak) immediately summoned all his ministers and councilors for an urgent consultation, asking them, 'Please weigh all the pros and cons of the situation and advise me what is appropriate for the occasion. Tell me what I am supposed to do now.' (5)

The situation was so sticky and sensitive that everyone was in a dilemma. Giving serious thoughts to the developments in Ayodhya, no one could determine on a particular course of action. No one could confidently advise whether the king should proceed to Ayodhya or stay at home¹. (6)

[Note—¹It was a sticky situation because whatever had happened in Ayodhya was an internal family matter of the royal household. Further, all the four sons of king Dasrath were married to princesses belonging to the household of king Janak. Had the crisis in Ayodhya been caused by some external force, such as an attack from an enemy, it would be easy to decide to go to help the king of Ayodhya. But in the present scenario, everyone wondered if it would be proper to interfere in matters that

were strictly private and related to family squabble. Who gets the crown and how inheritance matters are settled in a foreign state ought to be left to the ministers and councilors of the concerned state to decide upon, and Janak must not appear to be interfering uninvited. Janak's intervention, no matter how well-intentioned and done in good faith, might be interpreted as being tantamount to unwarranted interference in some other state's internal affairs, something that might not go down well with the people of that kingdom, resulting in a rift and friction in the otherwise cordial relationship that existed between the two kingdoms at present.

Besides this, since Bharat and Lord Ram were married to sisters of the same royal family, any interference by king Janak would look like taking side with one of the brothers at the cost of the interest of the other brother.

So therefore everyone was in a fix, not knowing what to advise king Janak on the issue of whether it would be proper to proceed to Ayodhya, or stay neutral and keep quiet.]

नृपहिं धीर धरि हृदयं बिचारी । पठए अवध चतुर चर चारी ॥ ७ ॥
बूझि भरत सति भाउ कुभाऊ । आएहु बेगि न होइ लखाऊ ॥ ८ ॥

nr̥pahim̐ dhīra dhari hr̥dayam̐ bicārī. paṭha'ē avadha catura cara cārī. 7.
būjhi bharata sati bhā'u kubhā'ū. ā'ēhu bēgi na hō'i lakhā'ū. 8.

The king (Janak) meanwhile reflected upon the matter, and after giving it serious thought he decided to send four clever and trusted spies of his (*catura cara cārī*) to Ayodhya, with a clear instructions to them: (7)

‘Go to Ayodhya secretly (in disguise) and find out what the fact is. Ascertain how Bharat has reacted to the developments, whether or not he is happy with what has happened there, and if he is at all involved in the conspiracy in any manner. Having accomplished your mission, make all haste to come here, but ensure that no one sees you there, no one gets any hint of your presence in the city. Keep your commission top secret.¹’ (8)

[Note—¹When king Janak first heard of the developments in Ayodhya, he could not believe his ears; it was a rude shock for him because from what he could understand about the royal family of Ayodhya during the brief interaction he had with members of this family, especially king Dasrath and his four sons, at the time of the marriage of the four princesses of Janak's household to the four sons of Dasrath, there was a perfect and inviolable bond of mutual love and affection between the four brothers, and king Dasrath was a stellar example of a noble heart and exemplary virtues. There was strict discipline in the family; there was perfect brotherly relationship between the four brothers; good manners and excellence of behaviour marked every member of the royal family of Ayodhya; and bonhomie and amiability effused naturally from them like fragrance from a flower. Besides that, the family had the renowned and most wise sage Vasistha as its guru, chief advisor and priest.

In this backdrop, it seemed extremely unlikely and incredulous that such a horrible development would ever unfold in Ayodhya, especially with a queen of king Dasrath being directly involved in it and the king himself being unable to stop the wicked plan from going ahead. The doubt factor was enhanced because what the news

conveyed meant a direct clash between Lord Ram and Bharat, something Janak could not digest. How could it ever be so that Bharat would want to grab the kingdom by ousting his beloved elder brother Lord Ram to the forest?

Janak was totally confused and extremely perturbed. After all, all the four brothers had wives who were sisters and belonged to the same family. Janak was confounded because he could not decide with whom to side.

This is also the reason why his advisors had kept mum when their king asked them for advice—for they could not decide what to advise him as his family was directly related to the affected family of Ayodhya by matrimonial ties, and no one could be sure how Janak would respond personally to these developments. Hence, none of his own courtiers and advisors wished to take the risk of annoying king Janak, for it would be a great risk and prove a peril for them if suppose their advice does not go down well with the king.

Under the circumstances, king Janak thought it wise to send his personal trusted spies to Ayodhya to ascertain facts.

It is to be remarked here that Janak has sent ‘four spies’ instead of only one. Why? Because it is always better to have more than one person on such sensitive missions so that they can support each other in case of emergency, as well as consult each other if a doubt arises.]

दो०. गए अवध चर भरत गति बूझि देखि करतूति ।
चले चित्रकूटहि भरतु चार चले तेरहूति ॥ २७१ ॥

dōhā.

ga'e avadha cara bharata gati būjhi dēkhi karatūti.
calē citrakūṭahi bharatu cāra calē tērahūti. 271.

The four spies went to Ayodhya and thoroughly investigated the matter. They found out about Bharat's attitude and intentions, the way he had reacted to the developments, and discovered that he was innocent.

No sooner had Bharat made his departure for Chitrakoot, than the four spies made haste to return to ‘Tirhut’ (which was another name for Janakpur, the capital city of king Janak)¹. (Doha no. 271)

[Note—¹It is clear from this verse that the four spies of king Janak had abided in Ayodhya for some time, and waited there till the time Bharat and his entourage departed for Chitrakoot to meet Lord Ram. It gave them ample time and a first hand knowledge of the reality of the situation—about the facts of the case, about Bharat's immaculate character and his innocence, about how the common citizen had reacted to the developments about Lord Ram's going to the forest as well as Bharat declining to accept the crown, and finally the destination where Bharat and his entourage were headed to. This is how king Janak came to know where to go himself—and so he immediately made arrangements and proceeded to Chitrakoot. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 272 herein below.}]

चौ०. दूतन्ह आइ भरत कइ करनी । जनक समाज जथामति बरनी ॥ १ ॥

सुनि गुर परिजन सचिव महीपति । भे सब सोच सनेहँ बिकल अति ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

dūtanha ā'i bharata ka'i karani. janaka samāja jathāmati baranī. 1.
suni gura parijana saciva mahīpati. bhē saba sōca sanēham' bikala ati. 2.

The messengers (“dūtanha”; i.e. the spies) came back and narrated before the assembly of king Janak, to the best of their abilities, everything they had learnt about Bharat and what he had done. (1)

Hearing their report, everyone in the court, including the guru of the royal family (i.e. sage Sadanand), members and relations of the family, the ministers of the kingdom, as well as the king himself, become pensive and overcome with emotions. (2)

धरि धीरजु करि भरत बड़ाई । लिए सुभट साहनी बोलाई ॥ ३ ॥

घर पुर देस राखि रखवारे । हय गय रथ बहु जान सँवारे ॥ ४ ॥

dhari dhīraju kari bharata baṛāī. li'ē subhaṭa sāhanī bōlāī. 3.
ghara pura dēsa rākhi rakhavārē. haya gaya ratha bahu jāna samvārē. 4.

Gathering their wits and showing patience, they praised Bharat and his character.
Then they summoned skilled servants, commanders and soldiers of the army.
(3)

Proper arrangements were made for taking care of the city and its households, as well as the administration of the kingdom in general by appointing competent persons at important posts to take charge of the affairs and ensure proper maintenance of law and order. [To wit, they were instructed to take proper care of the kingdom during the absence of king Janak.]

At the same time as making due arrangements for proper governance of the kingdom in general and the city of Janakpur in particular, instructions were given to get ready the horses, elephants and chariots as well as all other sorts of logistics that were needed for the long journey (to Chitrakoot, such as mules and other carriers to carry supplies etc.)¹. (4)

[Note—¹We have read earlier that Bharat too had made similar arrangements prior to his departure for Chitrakoot—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precede Doha no. 186; (ii) Doha no. 187.

The procession of Bharat had the same components as that of king Janak—horses, elephants, chariots, a strong contingent of the army, and assorted other kinds of vehicles for transporting people and supplies, such as mules and carriers. {Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 186; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 187; (iii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 189.}]

दुधरी साधि चले ततकाला । किए बिश्रामु न मग महिपाला ॥ ५ ॥

भोरहिं आजु नहाइ प्रयागा । चले जमुन उतरन सबु लागा ॥ ६ ॥

dugharī sādhi calē tatakālā. ki'ē biśrāmu na maga mahipālā. 5.
bhōrahīm āju nahā'i prayāgā. calē jamuna utarana sabu lāgā. 6.

After arrangements were put into place, the king ascertained (from royal astrologers) the proper time for departure and immediately set forth on his journey. The king (Janak) moved swiftly, without even taking a break anywhere on the way. (5)

Today morning he had taken a bath at Prayag (i.e. at Triveni), and soon thereafter the procession started to cross river Yamuna. (6)

खबरि लेन हम पठए नाथा । तिन्ह कहि अस महि नायउ माथा ॥ ७ ॥
साथ किरात छ सातक दीन्हे । मुनिबर तुरत बिदा चर कीन्हे ॥ ८ ॥

khabari lēna hama paṭha'e nāthā. tinha kahi asa mahi nāya'u māthā. 7.
sātha kirāta cha sātaka dīnhē. munibara turata bidā cara kīnhē. 8.

[The messengers explained to sage Vasistha the reason why they had come to meet him—] 'Oh Lord, we were told to go ahead as an advance party to scout and collect information.'

Saying thus, the messengers bowed their heads before the sage and became silent. (7)

The exalted sage (munibara) instructed six or seven Kirats¹ to accompany the messengers while granting them leave to return. (8)

[Note—¹These Kirats were the tribals who were in attendance during the conference that was underway at the time the messengers arrived, or may be these Kirats had accompanied the messengers themselves because they had acted as guides to them when they were searching for Lord Ram's hermitage in the wilderness of the dense forests and hills around Chitrakoot.]

दो०. सुनत जनक आगवनु सबु हरषेउ अवध समाजु ।
रघुनंदनहि सकोचु बड़ सोच बिबस सुरराजु ॥ २७२ ॥
dōhā.

sunata janaka āgavanu sabu haraṣē'u avadha samāju.
raghunandanahi sakōcu baṛa sōca bibasa surarāju. 272.

No sooner did the news of king Janak's arrival spread amongst the citizens of Ayodhya, there were contradictory reactions to it—for while everyone amongst the citizens felt very glad and happy, Lord Ram became pensive and the king of the gods became very worried¹. (Doha no. 272)

[Note—¹The news of king Janak coming to meet Lord Ram ignited hope in the hearts of the citizens of Ayodhya who by this time had become hopeless; it was a welcome news for them.

On the other hand, Lord Ram was in a fix, for now he would be under pressure to comply with king Janak's wish too in addition to that of Bharat. The Lord had observed that Bharat was gradually falling in line and would be easy to tackle*1, but king Janak's approach was unknown. It would be mighty difficult for the Lord to override Janak's words as he occupied a position that was equal to that of king Dasrath himself. So, suppose if Janak intervened determinedly and told Lord Ram that it is in the interest of all that he return home and accept the crown, as the good of the citizens should be the top priority for a king, the Lord would have no choice left; it would be impossible for him to defy king Janak who was a fatherly figure.

The worry of the gods and their king is understandable. They had somehow managed to manipulate Bharat's conscience and bend him to toe their line*2, but as for Janak, they weren't so sure. Their worry was that if Janak asked Lord Ram to return home, it would be very difficult for the Lord not to do so, and then the entire plan to eliminate the demons, the primary reason for Lord Ram coming to the forest in the first place*3, would go for a toss.

{*1= Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 268—to Doha no. 269.

*2= Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 265—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 266.

*3= Ram Charit Manas, (a) Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 11; (b) Aranya Kand, Doha no. 9 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede it.}]

चौ०. गरड़ गलानि कुटिल कैकेई । काहि कहै केहि दूषनु देई ॥ १ ॥

अस मन आनि मुदित नर नारी । भयउ बहोरि रहब दिन चारी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

gara'i galāni kuṭila kaikēī. kāhi kahai kēhi dūṣanu dēī. 1.

asa mana āni mudita nara nārī. bhaya'u bahōri rahaba dina cārī. 2.

The wicked Kaikeyi, meanwhile, was buried in shame and guilt. She did not know with whom to share her sadness, with whom to confide with the extent of her remorse, the torment her heart was subjected to, and the emotional upheaval she was suffering from due to her thoughtless deeds¹. (1)

While Kaikeyi was surrounded by a pall of gloom and distress, the citizens, the men and the women (who had accompanied Bharat to Chitrakoot), on the other hand, were very glad at the news of king Janak's arrival, because it would give them a chance to abide at Chitrakoot and enjoy Lord Ram's company for some more time, say for another four-five days (rahaba dina cārī)². (2)

[Note—¹The poor Kaikeyi had no friend; she felt herself completely isolated and marooned, being shunned by one and all; no one wished to be seen talking with her. She was loathed and hated by everyone.

Now when she came to learn what the messengers of king Janak had told sage Vasistha about the all-round condemnation Kaikeyi got when the news of her evil

deeds reached Janakpur*1, she felt so mightily ashamed of herself, so heavy with a sense of shame and guilt that she wished that the earth opened below her feet and swallow her. She had never ever imagined that her infamy would spread so far and wide, that her selfishness would make her a pariah of the entire civilized world.

{*1 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 271.}

²Before the news of king Janak's arrival reached the hermitage of Lord Ram, the meeting between the Lord and Bharat seemed to be heading for a quick conclusion. Though there seemed to be a logjam but it would soon be sorted out because Bharat had clearly expressed his willingness to obey what the Lord says*2.

From all available hints, the citizens had concluded, as if by a hunch, that Lord Ram would not return home at this juncture, and so in all probability the conference would end the next day and then they would be required to pack up and get on the road to travel back home. They were in a fix; the citizens wished to spend more time at Chitrakoot—for two reasons. First, they wanted to spend as much time near their beloved Lord Ram as was possible; and two, they had been thoroughly enjoying the scenic beauty of Chitrakoot*3. They had led almost their entire lives in a prosperous city of Ayodhya, an urban center of pomp and pageant, but this had deprived them the bliss, the peace, the joy and the thrill that one gets in the lap of un-tampered, pristine Nature, something that Chitrakoot provided them with. So obviously, they wanted to enjoy this opportunity for some more days, and the arrival of king Janak gave them this window of opportunity to stay at Chitrakoot for some more time; it was a much appreciated breather for all the citizens.

{*2 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2 and 7 that precede Doha no. 269.

*3 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 248—to Doha no. 249; (ii) Doha no. 251 along with Chaupai line no. 1 that follow it.}]

एहि प्रकार गत बासर सोऊ । प्रात नहान लाग सबु कोऊ ॥ ३ ॥
करि मज्जनु पूजहिं नर नारी । गनप गौरि तिपुरारि तमारी ॥ ४ ॥

ēhi prakāra gata bāsara sō'ū. prāta nahāna lāga sabu kō'ū. 3.
kari majjanu pūjahim nara nārī. ganapa gauri tipurāri tamārī. 4.

In this way, that day* passed away (gata bāsara sō'ū).

[*Which day? The day the first conference was held between Bharat and Lord Ram, at the end of which messengers of king Janak had arrived.]

The next morning, everyone got up and began taking their baths#.

[#Where did the people bathe? Obviously, in the river Mandakini that flowed nearby.] (3)

After taking bath and cleaning themselves, the people, the males as well as the females, offered worship to Lord Ganesh (ganapa), goddess Gauri ("gauri"; i.e. Parvati, the divine consort of Lord Shiva and the mother of Lord Ganesh; the Mother Goddess), Lord Tripurari ("tipurāri"; i.e. Lord Shiva; the Lord who vanquished the demon named Tripura; the Lord of the three worlds), and the Sun God who removes darkness of the night (tamārī). (4)

रमा रमन पद बंदि बहोरी । बिनवहिं अंजुलि अंचल जोरी ॥ ५ ॥
 राजा रामु जानकी रानी । आनंद अवधि अवध रजधानी ॥ ६ ॥

ramā ramana pada bandi bahōrī. binavahim anjuli añcala jōrī. 5.
 rājā rāmu jānakī rānī. ānamāda avadhi avadha rajadhānī. 6.

Then the people bowed before the holy feet of Lord Vishnu and goddess Laxmi (ramā ramana), and prayed to them reverentially with joined palms of their hands. (5)

They sought the blessings of the divine couple (Vishnu and Laxmi) that Lord Ram be the eternal king of Ayodhya with Sita as the queen, and that there be all-round happiness and joy in the kingdom of Ayodhya at large, as well as in its capital city that bears the same name¹. (6)

[Note—¹Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 20—to Doha no. 23; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 27—to Doha no. 29.]

सुबस बसउ फिरि सहित समाजा । भरतहि रामु करहुँ जुबराजा ॥ ७ ॥
 एहि सुख सुधाँ सींचि सब काहू । देव देहु जग जीवन लाहू ॥ ८ ॥

subasa basa'u phiri sahita samājā. bharatahi rāmu karahum̃ jubarājā. 7.
 ēhi sukha sudhām̃ sīñci saba kāhū. dēva dēhu jaga jīvana lāhū. 8.

The citizens prayed that good times come back to Ayodhya once again, and all sorts of auspiciousness and cheer rule the city. Once Lord Ram ascends the throne, let it be so that he appoints Bharat as the crown prince of the kingdom¹. (7)

They prayed: ‘Oh Lord, please shower such nectar-like blessings upon us so that our parched souls find succour and solace, and we shalt offer our immense gratitude and thankfulness to thee. Oh Lord, please give us an opportunity that we can enjoy the fruit of our lives to its full extent.’ (8)

[Note—¹This verse clearly shows that the citizens harboured no ill-will against Bharat. Whatever they might have thought of him in the beginning*1, but as developments unfolded, all cloud of doubt was removed and the people realized eventually that Bharat was innocent and he loved Lord Ram more than anything or anyone else, which realization had made Bharat endeared to all the citizens*2.

{*1 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 48; (ii) Doha no. 158 (Bharat gets a very cold reception from the citizens when he returned to Ayodhya after the death of king Dasrath and Lord Ram’s banishment to the forest; no one wanted to greet him or even look at him).

*2 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 184—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 185.}]

दो०. गुर समाज भाइन्ह सहित राम राजु पुर होउ ।

अछत राम राजा अवध मरिअ माग सबु कोउ ॥ २७३ ॥

dōhā.

gura samāja bhā'inha sahita rāma rāju pura hō'u.

achata rāma rājā avadha mari'a māga sabu kō'u. 273.

[The citizens prayed—] 'Oh Lord! Let there be the rule of Lord Ram as the king-emperor of Ayodhya, with sage Vasistha as the guru and the chief priest, and all the brothers in attendance and joining hands with the Lord while he governs the kingdom.

Let Lord Ram be the eternal ruler of Ayodhya, and let us die while he is its king.'

This was the way everyone prayed to the deities mentioned herein above (i.e. Ganesh, Parvati, Lord Shiva, the Sun God, and Lord Vishnu and goddess Laxmi). (Doha no. 273)

चौ०. सुनि सनेहमय पुरजन बानी । निंदहिं जोग बिरति मुनि ग्यानी ॥ १ ॥

एहि बिधि नित्यकरम करि पुरजन । रामहि करहिं प्रनाम पुलकि तन ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sunī sanēhamaya purajana bānī. nindahim jōga birati muni gyānī. 1.

ēhi bidhi nityakarama kari purajana. rāmaḥi karahim pranāma pulaki tana. 2.

When the sages, hermits and ascetics who were prided themselves for their spiritual achievements and knowledge, heard the words of the citizens of Ayodhya (words that were soaked in nectar-like beauty of emotions of love and affection for Lord Ram, the manifested form of the Supreme Being himself), they felt abashed and ashamed of themselves and their boast of spiritual knowledge and successes¹. (1)

In this way, after finishing their daily purification routine and offering of prayers to revered deities, the citizens paid their reverence to Lord Ram joyously by bowing before him and a thrill passing through their bodies. (2)

[Note—¹The sages, ascetics and hermits undertook extreme steps and endured hardships in order to attain bliss of god-realisation; they lived austere lives, did severed penance, abstained from pleasures and comforts of the world, yet bliss and beatitude were a distant dream for them; they weren't sure if they would attain nearness with the Lord God in their lives.

When they heard the prayers of the citizens of Ayodhya, they realized how fortunate these people were, and how wrong they themselves were while seeking bliss and beatitude. The sages, hermits and ascetics had to endure so much hardship and sufferings to get something which the citizens would get while enjoying the comforts and pleasures of life. Didn't this prove that they were less fortunate than the citizens of Ayodhya? This realization made the sages, hermits and ascetics involved in doing Tapa and other spiritual practices feel abashed that their boast of moral high ground

was actually hollow, and that the real blessed ones were the ordinary citizens of Ayodhya who live in so close proximity of the Lord that they have direct access to him anytime of the day and night they want to meet the Lord. These citizens had sweets in both their hands—for they could enjoy the comforts of the material world at the same time as deriving spiritual bliss that comes with being near to the Lord God.]

ऊँच नीच मध्यम नर नारी । लहहिँ दरसु निज निज अनुहारी ॥ ३ ॥
सावधान सबही सनमानहिँ । सकल सराहत कृपानिधानहिँ ॥ ४ ॥

ūm̐ca nīca madhyama nara nārī. lahaḥiṁ darasu nija nija anuhārī. 3.
sāvadhāna sabahī sanamānahiṁ. sakala sarāhata kṛpānidhānahiṁ. 4.

All categories of citizens, those of high stature as well as those of medium and low standing in the society—everyone paid obeisance to Lord Ram, sought his blessings and thoroughly enjoyed the company of the Lord in accordance with the individual's personal equation with the Lord¹. (3)

Lord Ram was careful to show attention to each person and respect the individual's emotions for him.

This personal attention of the Lord for every single citizen drew widespread praise, and everyone lauded the Lord who was an abode of grace, mercy and compassion². (4)

[Note—¹Each individual, whether a male or a female, had established some sort of personal equation with Lord Ram—some treated him as a friend, others as their Lord, some as a Master and still others as a son, a brother, a close or distant relation, and in this way there was no limit to the different ways in which the people had established their personal bond with the ever-obliging Lord Ram, who would respond to each individual in accordance with his or her relationship with him.

A similar situation has prevailed in Janakpur and has been narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 241—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 242.

²The fact that Lord Ram responded to each individual personally is amply proved when we read that at the time of his arrival in Ayodhya at the end of fourteen years, the Lord has met every single citizen personally by assuming countless forms—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 6.

Everyone felt happy with the thought that Lord Ram has met him or her personally, without realizing how it was managed by him that he would give a personal touch by meeting thousands of people simultaneously. It was indeed a miracle of sorts.]

लरिकाइहि तें रघुबर बानी । पालत नीति प्रीति पहिचानी ॥ ५ ॥
सील सकोच सिंधु रघुराऊ । सुमुख सुलोचन सरल सुभाऊ ॥ ६ ॥

larikā'ihī tēm raghubara bānī. pālata nīti prīti pahicānī. 5.
sīla sakōca sindhu raghurā'ū. sumukha sulōcana sarala subhā'ū. 6.

Right from the very days of his childhood, it is a well-known word of honour given by Lord Ram that he knows how to respect and respond to one's affection for him, and how to act in a righteous and proper manner accordingly¹. (5)

Indeed, in all sooth and without gainsay, Lord Ram is an ocean of grace and modesty. He has a cheerful face (who never shows annoyance at anyone; who never scowls or frowns upon anybody).

His eyes are also sweet (i.e. affection seems to pour out from the Lord's eyes when he sees someone).

And likewise, the Lord's nature, his temperament is exceptionally amiable and simple (i.e. he has a friendly disposition, is easily approachable, and has no crookedness, pretensions or deceit in his heart)². (6)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 28-a along with Chaupai line nos. 4-11 that precede it; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 200; (b) Uttar Kand, (iii) Doha no. 47 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it.

²In this context, verse nos. 100 and 223 of Vinai Patrika are very relevant. Even sage Vasistha has praised the nature of Lord Ram in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 10.]

कहत राम गुन गन अनुरागे । सब निज भाग सराहन लागे ॥ ७ ॥
हम सम पुन्य पुंज जग थोरे । जिन्हहि रामु जानत करि मोरे ॥ ८ ॥

kahata rāma guna gana anurāgē. saba nija bhāga sarāhana lāgē. 7.
hama sama pun'ya punja jaga thōrē. jinhahi rāmu jānata kari mōrē. 8.

Showing affection for Lord Ram and praising lavishly his glories and virtues as well as his excellent nature, the citizens began to praise their own good fortune and luck (that they have a Lord like Lord Ram, that they are citizens of a kingdom with such a magnanimous, benevolent and graceful Lord as their king). (7)

The citizens exulted: 'Indeed and in all sooth, there are very few people in this world who would be as lucky and fortunate as we are whom Lord Ram recognizes as being his very own, as being very close to him, as being his subjects and close associates.'¹ (8)

[Note—¹In this context, refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 16; (b) Ayodhya Kand, (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 113; and (c) Uttar Kand, (iii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 4.

Refer also to the Book "Dohawali", verse no. 141.]

दो०. प्रेम मगन तेहि समय सब सुनि आवत मिथिलेसु ।
सहित सभा संभ्रम उठेउ रबिकुल कमल दिनेसु ॥ २७४ ॥

dōhā.

prēma magana tēhi samaya saba suni āvata mithilēsu.
sahita sabhā sambhrama uṭhē'u rabikula kamala dinēsu. 274.

When the citizens were thus enjoying their proximity with Lord Ram and interacting with the Lord on a virtual one-on-one basis, word came in that king Janak was coming soon.

Hearing this news, Lord Ram, who was like a sun for the illustrious family belonging to the Solar Race, got up immediately in all haste along with all those who were assembled there on that occasion. [To wit, no sooner the news arrived that king Janak was near the Lord's hermitage and could come in any moment, but Lord Ram and other members of the assembly got up to get ready to warmly receive the great king.] (Doha no. 274)

[Note—King Janak had sent his messengers as an advance team to scout for the exact location of Lord Ram's hermitage while his entourage was still crossing river Yamuna after taking bath at Prayag—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 272.

After meeting sage Vasistha and others, these messengers were sent back by the sage with a group of local tribesmen, the Kirats, to go and bring the king to the Lord's hermitage—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 272.

Then we read that evening descended on that day, and early next morning the citizens took their bath and assembled near Lord Ram to offer their respects to him when the news of king Janak's arrival reached them.

This clearly means that the king arrived on the next day of the visit of his messengers to Lord Ram's hermitage, sometimes during the afternoon of the previous day.]

चौ०. भाइ सचिव गुर पुरजन साथ । आगें गवनु कीन्ह रघुनाथा ॥ १ ॥
गिरिबरु दीख जनकपति जबहीं । करि प्रनामु रथ त्यागेउ तबहीं ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

bhā'i saciva gura purajana sāthā. āgērṁ gavanu kīnha raghunāthā. 1.
giribaru dīkha janakapati jabahīṁ. kari pranāmu ratha tyāgē'u tabahīṁ. 2.

Accompanied by his brothers¹, ministers, guru (sage Vasistha) and senior citizens, Lord Ram led the way to go forward and receive king Janak. (1)

Meanwhile, when king Janak beheld the chain of excellent hills that constituted the hilly terrain of Chitrakoot, he felt exhilarated, and out of reverence for them he got down from his chariot and bowed before the hills². (2)

[Note—¹Though it is not specifically mentioned who were the ‘brothers’ whom Lord Ram took along with him while he hastened to meet and welcome king Janak, but in all probability he left behind the youngest brother, Shatrughan, to keep company of Sita and guard her during the Lord’s brief absence from the hermitage, while he took along with him Laxman and Bharat.

That the Lord would most probably do so is supported by an earlier instance when he had gone to meet and welcome sage Vasistha and the rest of the party, taking Bharat and Laxman with him, and leaving Shatrughan to guard Sita. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 243.}

²King Janak was not an ordinary king; he was exceptionally wise and enlightened, and had great knowledge of geography and history of the wider realm surrounding his actual kingdom. He must have sent his spies and messengers in all the directions, and they must have enquired in detail about the importance and other relevant details of Chitrakoot. As we have read earlier, this place was praised even by sage Valmiki who had advised Lord Ram to stay there in the vicinity of river Mandakini, a stream of river Ganges, because a lot many great sages, hermits and ascetics, one being the exalted sage Atri whom Valmiki named particularly, dwelt in that area to do penances and lead an austere life to pursue their spiritual goals, and who would be immensely benefited by Lord Ram’s presence amongst them. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 132 along with Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede it.}

The hills of Chitrakoot and its surrounding forests had an aura of holiness and spirituality pervading all around.

This special character of Chitrakoot, along with the fact that Lord Ram himself was present there at the moment, motivated king Janak to show high respect to the area by stepping down from his chariot and bowing his head before the hills in a general way.

We must not forget that Janak had subtly realized that Lord Ram was no ordinary prince, but someone very special, someone who resonated with the higher state of Consciousness that transcended mundane level of existence, a state that a mystic attains during later phases of meditation when he rises above the mundane existence and attains a transcendental state of existence where his ‘individual self’ virtually merges with the ‘cosmic Self’. This ‘cosmic Self’, or the cosmic Consciousness, was represented by Lord Ram. This is evident when we read the following verses of Ram Charit Manas: Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 215—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 216; (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 217.

Considering all these factors together, it is evident why king Janak showed so much reverence to this particular place known as Chitrakoot.]

राम दरस लालसा उछाहू । पथ श्रम लेसु कलेसु न काहू ॥ ३ ॥

मन तहँ जहँ रघुबर बैदेही । बिनु मन तन दुख सुख सुधि केही ॥ ४ ॥

rāma darasa lālasā uchāhū. patha śrama lēsu kalēsu na kāhū. 3.
mana taham̐ jaham̐ raghubara baidēhī. binu mana tana dukha sukha sudhi
kēhī. 4.

Janak and the rest of his company had a great longing to have a glimpse of the divine form of Lord Ram, and they were all very excited about it.

So, the weariness of the long and tiring journey was not at all felt by anyone of them. (3)

With their minds and hearts being there where Lord Ram and Sita were, with the thoughts of the Lord and the joy of meeting him completely occupying their minds and hearts, there was no scope left for anyone to feel or perceive anything else, because when the mind is lost in some thought, when the mind is occupied somewhere else, no one has any care for the condition of the physical body, for it is the mind that first perceives all inputs of the sense organs of the body and then it guides the creature to respond accordingly. (4)

आवत जनकु चले एहि भाँती । सहित समाज प्रेम मति माती ॥ ५ ॥
आए निकट देखि अनुरागे । सादर मिलन परसपर लागे ॥ ६ ॥

āvata janaku calē ēhi bhāmṭī. sahita samāja prēma mati mātī. 5.
ā'ē nikaṭa dēkhi anurāgē. sādara milana parasapara lāgē. 6.

King Janak and his entourage were thus coming towards the hermitage of Lord Ram at Chitrakoot with all eagerness and in a mesmerized manner, as everyone was intoxicated and overwhelmed with the emotion of love and affection for the Lord.

[To wit, the people moved swiftly and eagerly, not desiring to waste any time, for they wanted to see Lord Ram and Sita as soon as it was possible. Like those who are under the influence of an intoxicating drink, they did not feel tired also, and neither did they think of anything else but to have the chance to see Lord Ram and Sita as quickly as possible.] (5)

Finally, when the two groups (one led by Lord Ram, and the other led by king Janak) came face to face, there was a rush of emotions as the people met and embraced each other most respectfully and affectionately¹. (6)

[Note—¹It was indeed a fascinating sight. We can visualize this meeting and how the two parties mingled with each other, rushing forward with outstretched arms and a loud cheer of welcome as soon as they came within sight of each other, when we compare it with a situation when two great rivers meet, such as at Triveni, to become one great mass of turbulent water. The people lost their composure and restraint, and there was a great uproar of joyous cheer as everyone met and embraced his counterpart from the opposite camp with enthusiasm and warmth.

It would be really interesting to contrast this meeting with the situation when two opposing armies clash head-on in a hand-to-hand combat.

For some moments, it was difficult to distinguish between who belonged to the party from Ayodhya and who was from Janakpur.]

लगे जनक मुनिजन पद बंदन । रिषिन्ह प्रनामु कीन्ह रघुनंदन ॥ ७ ॥
भाइन्ह सहित रामु मिलि राजहि । चले लवाइ समेत समाजहि ॥ ८ ॥

lagē janaka munijana pada bandana. riṣinha pranāmu kīnha raghunandana. 7.
bhā'inha sahita rāmu mili rājahi. calē lavā'i samēta samājahi. 8.

King Janak began bowing before the sages who had accompanied Lord Ram as he went to receive the guests, while the Lord (raghunandana; “the son of king Raghu’s family”) himself began to bow and pay his respects to the sages who had accompanied king Janak. (7)

Lord Ram, together with his brothers, personally met the king (Janak) and showed respect to him, and then the Lord escorted the king and led his entire entourage to the hermitage. (8)

दो०. आश्रम सागर सांत रस पूरन पावन पाथु ।
सेन मनहुँ करुना सरित लिएँ जाहिँ रघुनाथु ॥ २७५ ॥

dōhā.

āśrama sāgara sānta rasa pūrana pāvana pāthu.
sēna manahum' karunā sarita li'ēm' jāhiṁ raghunāthu. 275.

Lord Ram’s abode (hermitage; “āśrama”) was like an ocean that was filled with the water of peace, serenity and tranquility, while the army of king Janak (“sēna”; i.e. his entourage) was like a river that was much agitated by the presence of turbulent currents symbolizing emotions driven by love and affection for the Lord, and the Lord escorting this company to his hermitage was like guiding a great river along a holy path towards the ocean to finally make the river merge with the latter and help it attain calmness of the ocean. (Doha no. 275)

[Note—This is a wonderful imagery. The river is turbulent and swelling as it passes over varied terrain along its long journey from the mountains to the ocean. The ocean meanwhile is a vast and stable reservoir of water. The river moves towards the ocean, and not vice versa. Once the river falls in the ocean, it loses its own identity and character, but becomes one like the ocean itself.

In this metaphor, Lord Ram is leading the agitated company of king Janak to his hermitage which is calm and tranquil, where peace and serenity pervades everywhere. Once the company reaches the Lord’s hermitage, its agitation would subside, and it would become as calm as the people of Ayodhya were.

Another remarkable thing about this metaphor is that it reminds one of king Bhagirath, an ancestor of Lord Ram. Bhagirath is credited for bringing the holy river Ganges from heaven down to earth, and then make it follow behind his chariot as he headed towards the place where the remains of his ancestors, the sixty thousand sons of king Sagar, were lying near the shore of the ocean, so that by the touch of the water of the holy river they all can find deliverance. According to the Purans, this is how river Ganges went and fell in the ocean at a place called ‘Ganga-Sagar’ on the east coast of the Indian sub-continent.]

चौ०. बोरति ग्यान बिराग करारे । बचन ससोक मिलत नद नारे ॥ १ ॥

सोच उसास समीर तरंगा । धीरज तट तरुबर कर भंगा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

bōrati gyāna birāga karārē. bacana sasōka milata nada nārē. 1.
sōca usāsa samīra taraṅgā. dhīraja taṭa tarubara kara bhaṅgā. 2.

This symbolic river flooded its banks representing Gyan (gnosis; enlightenment and wisdom) and Vairagya (renunciation, dispassion) as it flowed towards the ocean represented by Lord Ram's hermitage¹.

The deep sighs and sorrowful utterances of the people in Janak's entourage were like the many rivulets and streams that fell in this river en-route to the ocean².
(2)

[Note—¹To wit, both Gyan and Vairagya lost their value as they were swamped by the turbulent waters of loving emotions exhibited by the members of Janak's party. Though king Janak was famous as being a most self-realised and enlightened king, one who was rarely affected by external factors and had exemplary control over his emotions, but when it came to his relationship with Lord Ram, everything took a backseat, and the king lost his legendary calmness and dispassionate nature.

²The people sighed and talked in a sorrowful manner as they moved towards the hermitage of Lord Ram. One of the topics that was dominant and which caused much agitation was the sight of Lord Ram dressed as a hermit. We have read earlier that when the messengers who were sent as scouts by king Janak had seen Lord Ram in a hermit's habit, they too were moved to sorrow—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 270.]

बिषम बिषाद तोरावति धारा । भय भ्रम भवँर अबर्त अपारा ॥ ३ ॥

केवट बुध बिद्या बड़ि नावा । सकहिं न खेड़ ऐक नहिं आवा ॥ ४ ॥

biṣama biṣāda tōrāvati dhārā. bhaya bhrama bhavam̐ra abarta apārā. 3.
kēvaṭa budha bidyā baḍi nāvā. sakahiṁ na khē'i aika nahim̐ āvā. 4.

Sorrowful lamentations and sound of sighs, as well as the fear of what would happen next were like the currents and strong winds as well as the violently churning whirlpools that lashed at and undercut the trees symbolizing patience and courage that were present along the banks of this river, resulting in felling them down one by one¹.
(3)

The wise men present in the company of king Janak were like the expert boatmen (who could have given direction to the people, providing them with advice that would calm them down), but even they failed to bring some semblance of calmness and stability to the group as they themselves were at a loss to fathom the gravity of the situation and find a solution to it². (4)

[Note—¹To wit, the people were so sorrowful that they could not desist from sighing and lamenting, which in turn broke their patience and undercut their courage to bear with the adversity of the circumstance in a calm manner. Their mind churned and they

feared for the worst. As a result, it became difficult for the people to maintain their composure and calmness no matter how hard they tried.

²These wise men themselves were mightily affected by the developments so much so that they found it hard to control their own emotions, what to talk of advising others. Though under ordinary circumstances, wise men act as an anchor that would help give stability to the masses when they are highly agitated and need moral support and guidance, but ironically these men themselves had lost their patience and were on edge. Sorrow and grief had clouded their minds, and they were not in a position to help others.

In short, this symbolic river was very turbulent, and there was no boat in sight that the people could hail to take them on board so that their fears of drowning were dispelled.]

बनचर कोल किरात बिचारे । थके बिलोकि पथिक हियँ हारे ॥ ५ ॥
आश्रम उदधि मिली जब जाई । मनहुँ उठेउ अंबुधि अकुलाई ॥ ६ ॥

banacara kōla kirāta bicārē. thakē bilōki pathika hiyaṁ hārē. 5.
āśrama udadhi milī jaba jāī. manahum̐ uṭhē'u ambudhi akulāī. 6.

Meanwhile, the humble forest-dwelling tribals, such as the Kols and the Kirats, themselves felt dismayed and sad when they observed the distressed and agitated condition of the guests, thinking that it was due to the weariness caused by a long and arduous journey¹. (5)

Finally, when this symbolic river characterized by sorrows, lamentations, sighs, dismay and distress entered the hermitage of Lord Ram to merge with the ocean of peace, serenity and tranquility present there, there was a great turmoil, and the calmness and placidity of the Lord's hermitage was disturbed by the emotional and physical churning this caused². (6)

[Note—¹The humble tribesmen did not realize the real cause of the distress of the people of Janakpur. Their sighing and lamentations were interpreted by these poor and simple-hearted tribals as being caused by the stress of a long and tiring journey.

These simple folks did not even know that the guests were from a kingdom whose people had seen Lord Ram in the magnificent finesse of a princely groom, finely attired, well decorated with royal ornaments and robes befitting a great prince of a great kingdom, exuberant with an aura of majestic charm and fantastic attraction effusing out of his entire persona like the invisible pull of a natural piece of magnet that draws every piece of iron around it towards itself. So, when these people of Janakpur saw Lord Ram dressed as an ordinary hermit, they were crestfallen; their sadness and dismay knew no bounds.

This was something that the humble tribals could not fathom, so they thought that the sighs and lamentations emanating from the guests, as well as the way they virtually dragged themselves with heavy legs as they trudged along slowly towards the hermitage of Lord Ram was caused by weariness of a long and tiresome journey.

²As we have observed, Lord Ram and his companions met king Janak and his party at some distance from the Lord's hermitage. The hermitage itself was an oasis of peace, tranquility, serenity and calmness. So, when the huge mass of people who were lamenting and sighing and feeling very tired entered the precincts of the Lord's hermitage, it is but natural that its tranquility and calmness would be disturbed. There was a lot of commotion with a lot of jostling and bustling around just like it would happen when a huge crowd of newcomers enter a camp where the people already present there had settled down peacefully in the places allotted to them.

Even at a place where a river opens into an ocean or a sea, there is a lot of churning and splashing of the water.]

सोक बिकल दोउ राज समाजा । रहा न ग्यानु न धीरजु लाजा ॥ ७ ॥
भूप रूप गुन सील सराही । रोवहिं सोक सिंधु अवगाही ॥ ८ ॥

sōka bikala dō'u rāja samājā. rahā na gyānu na dhīraju lājā. 7.
bhūpa rūpa guna sīla sarāhī. rōvahīṁ sōka sindhu avagāhī. 8.

No sooner the two royal communities (i.e. one belong to Ayodhya, and the other to Janakpur) met each other, but there was a huge turmoil; everyone felt very distressed and sad, everyone felt the emotional pain of his counterpart from the other group so much so that during those poignant moments there was a complete loss of sense of protocol, wisdom, patience and self-restraint amongst the members of the two communities. (7)

Remembering and praising the handsome form of the late king Dasrath, extolling the immensity of his glories and virtues, everyone wept and sorely lamented. It appeared that the two communities were being virtually drowned in an ocean of grief and sorrows while condoling the death of the great king Dasrath¹. (8)

[Note—¹We have already read that everyone in Janakpur knew about the death of king Dasrath—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 271.

So, when the two groups met for the first time, as Janak's entourage entered the hermitage of Lord Ram where the citizens of Ayodhya had already pitched their camps and had been staying for some time since their arrival there, it turned out to be a sort of a condolence meeting. We must observe here that the people of Janakpur had become greatly distressed when they saw Lord Ram in the habit of a hermit at the time the Lord had gone out to receive them on the outskirts of his hermitage, but now as the group from Janakpur entered the hermitage and met the people of Ayodhya already present there, there was a fresh cause of outburst of emotions as the memory of the late king Dasrath was revived.

The people of Janakpur had seen and some of them had also personally interacted with Dasrath when he had gone there to participate in the marriage ceremony of Lord Ram. He had struck a cord of friendliness and had fostered such a close, amiable and cordial relationship with everyone in Janakpur, right from the royal family of king Janak down to the ordinary citizens, that he had endeared himself to them so much so that the news of his death struck the people hard at a virtual personal level.

The matrimonial relationship established between the two great royal families of the time, of Ayodhya and Janakpur, with the four princes of the former marrying four princesses of the latter family, resulted in a bond of brotherliness and friendship between the two peoples of Ayodhya and Janakpur, who, though separated by geography, were eternally united and joined by mutual respect and affection for each other.

The death of king Dasrath had emotionally affected the peoples of Ayodhya and Janakpur equally. Hence, during this first meeting between the two communities, there was an expression of grief and sadness as they condoled with each other and regretted the king's death.]

छं०. अवगाहि सोक समुद्र सोचहिं नारि नर व्याकुल महा । १ ।
 दै दोष सकल सरोष बोलहिं बाम बिधि कीन्हो कहा ॥ २ ॥
 सुर सिद्ध तापस जोगिजन मुनि देखि दसा बिदेह की । ३ ।
 तुलसी न समरथु कोउ जो तरि सकै सरित सनेह की ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

avagāhi sōka samudra sōcahiṁ nāri nara byākula mahā. 1.
 dai dōṣa sakala sarōṣa bōlahiṁ bāma bidhi kīnhō kahā. 2.
 sura sid'dha tāpasa jōgijana muni dēkhi dasā bidēha kī. 3.
 tulasī na samarathu kō'u jō tari sakai sarita sanēha kī. 4.

All the citizens, the males as well as the females, were very agitated and virtually drowned in an ocean of grief and sorrows. (Chanda line no. 1)

They angrily blamed the Creator for all the misfortunes that had befallen upon everyone, saying: 'What has this Creator done, why hast we done that wouldst make him become so antagonized and opposed to us?' (Chanda line no. 2)

Meanwhile, the great gods, mystics, sages, recluses, hermits and ascetics who were present on the occasion (in the hermitage of Lord Ram) felt very distressed themselves when they observed how sorry and sad Janak was feeling. (Chanda line no. 3)

Tulsidas says that it is true that it is beyond the ability of anyone to cross a river symbolised by love and affection when it is in spate and its currents are sweeping violently¹. (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹Tulsidas, the saint-poet who composed Ram Charit Manas, rues and says that when it comes to the emotions pertaining to love and affection for someone whom a person respects very much and has established a close relationship with, every other consideration and factor becomes secondary, with this emotion taking a prime stand.

This is evident when one observes the case of king Janak. This king was highly enlightened and wise; he was honoured by the epithet 'Videha', i.e. a person who is not affected by the surrounding world as he is not even aware of physical sufferings or comforts of his own body, being immune to all stimuli and perceptions related to the mundane world. But even such an exalted and self-realised, wise and

enlightened soul as king Janak was feeling emotionally upset at the death of his close friend and brotherly king Dasrath*1. Janak was also moved when he saw Lord Ram, and for a time he forgot that he was supposed to remain dispassionate and neutral under all circumstances*2.

{Refer: *1 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 271.

*2 = Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 215—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 216; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 217.}]

सो०. किए अमित उपदेस जहँ तहँ लोगन्ह मुनिबरन्ह ।
धीरजु धरिअ नरेस कहेउ बसिष्ठ बिदेह सन ॥ २७६ ॥
sōraṭhā.

ki'ē amita upadēsa jaham̐ taham̐ lōganha munibaranha.
dhīraju dhari'a narēsa kahē'u basiṣṭha bidēha sana. 276.

Meanwhile, the great sages and wise souls who were present on the occasion intervened, and used their wisdom and wit to comfort the distressed people.

Sage Vasistha personally comforted king Janak, requesting him thus: 'Oh King (narēsa), please have courage and forbearance, please show patience and resilience.' (Sortha no. 276)

चौ०. जासु ग्यानु रबि भव निसि नासा । बचन किरन मुनि कमल बिकासा ॥ १ ॥
तेहि कि मोह ममता निअराई । यह सिय राम सनेह बड़ाई ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

jāsu gyānu rabi bhava nisi nāsā. bacana kirana muni kamala bikāsā. 1.
tēhi ki mōha mamatā ni'arāī. yaha siya rāma sanēha barāī. 2.

[Talking about king Janak, Tulsidas further observes—] 'He whose knowledge and wisdom were so high as to resemble the splendorous light of the sun inasmuch as they removed the darkness of ignorance from others just like the light of the sun dispels the darkness of the night, and he whose wise words would cheer even great sages just like the bright light of the sun's rays makes the lotus flowers bloom, --- (1)

--- Can delusions, worldly attachments and emotions ever move or affect such a self-realised, wise and enlightened person as Janak was?

[No; certainly not. Then why was Janak so much affected? Well, the answer is this—] It is the glory of Lord Ram and the profound mystical powers of the virtue of having affection for him that is exerted upon a soul that even a great dispassionate king as Janak was not spared from its magical spell, and as a result he was so greatly influenced by it¹. (2)

[Note—¹Janak has himself acknowledged the fact that the sight of Lord Ram has swept him off his foot, he is feeling helpless, and for once all his claim to spiritual

enlightenment and worldly dispassion has gone for a toss. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 215—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 216; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 217.}}

बिषई साधक सिद्ध सयाने । त्रिबिध जीव जग बेद बखाने ॥ ३ ॥

राम सनेह सरस मन जासू । साधु सभाँ बड़ आदर तासू ॥ ४ ॥

सोह न राम पेम बिनु ग्यानु । करनधार बिनु जिमि जलजानू ॥ ५ ॥

biṣa'ī sād'haka sid'dha sayānē. tribidha jīva jaga bēda bakhānē. 3.
rāma sanēha sarasa mana jāśū. sādhu sabhām' barā ādara tāśū. 4.
sōha na rāma pēma binu gyānū. karanadhāra binu jimi jalajānū. 5.

The Vedas (scriptures) have said that there are basically three types of creatures or living beings in the world (tribidha jīva jaga)—viz. those who are engrossed in enjoying the material world and pleasures of the sense organs though these are gross and transient (biṣa'ī); those who are spiritual seekers who renounce such attachments in search of truthful joy and eternity (sād'haka); and those who are wise, self-realised and enlightened as they have already achieved success in their spiritual journey (sid'dha sayānē). (3)

But a person whose heart and mind are soaked in love and affection for Lord Ram, a person who is drenched in this nectar like virtue (i.e. a person who has devotion for Lord Ram), such a person finds great honour and respect in the community of sages, seers and wise ones. [It is because such a person is very dear to Lord Ram.] (4)

Without having love and affection for Lord Ram (i.e. without having the virtue of Bhakti or devotion), merely to have Gyan (gnosis; spiritual wisdom; theoretical knowledge of the scriptures) is just like having a ship with no captain to guide it to its destination¹. (5)

[Note—¹The Lord has himself declared the importance of 'Bhakti'— meaning to have devotion for Lord Ram, and which has love and affection for the Lord as its most important feature— in Ram Charit Manas, (a) Aranya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 35; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 4-10 that precede Doha no. 43; (b) Uttar Kand, (iii) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 16; (iv) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 44—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 45; (v) Doha no. 46 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it; and (vi) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 85—to Doha no. 87.]

मुनि बहुबिधि बिदेहु समुझाए । रामघाट सब लोग नहाए ॥ ६ ॥

सकल सोक संकुल नर नारी । सो बासरु बीतेउ बिनु बारी ॥ ७ ॥

पसु खग मृगन्ह न कीन्ह अहारू । प्रिय परिजन कर कौन बिचारू ॥ ८ ॥

muni bahubidhi bidēhu samujhā'ē. rāmaghāṭa saba lōga nahā'ē. 6.
sakala sōka saṅkula nara nārī. sō bāsarū bītē'u binu bārī. 7.

pasu khaga mṛganha na kīnha ahārū. priya parijana kara kauna bicārū. 8.

The sage (Vasistha) comforted king Janak (Videha) in different ways. Then everyone took a bath at Ram Ghat (rāmaghāṭa)¹. (6)

Everyone was so overcome with sorrows and emotionally upset that the day passed without anyone as much as drinking water (what to talk of eating anything).

[To wit, the day king Janak's party arrived at Chitrakoot, no one ate or drank anything; everyone fasted.] (7)

The whole atmosphere was so poignant and heavy with an air of gloom, grief and despondency that its effect was felt even by the humble animals and birds² who too did not partake of anything that day, so there was no wonder that human beings fasted that day as no one had any appetite or thirst left for anything. (8)

[Note—¹The word “rāmaghāṭa” consists of two parts—viz. “Ram” and “Ghat”. The ‘Ghat’ is the common name applied to the bank of a river which usually has steps leading to the water, and it is used by people to descend to the river from the land near its banks to take a bath. The spot on the bank of river Mandakini near Lord Ram's hermitage, where the Lord would go and take his daily bath, as well as from where drinking water was collected for use in the hermitage, was named after him as ‘Ram Ghat’.

²There are three words used in the text, viz. “pasu khaga mṛganha”. These words taken independently mean an animal (pasu), a bird (khaga), and a four-footed animal such as the deer (mṛganha).

But a bird who can fly, a four-footed animal who uses legs to walk on land, as well as reptiles who are more earth-bound—all come under the classification of the being members of the animal kingdom.

Hence, this verse may be interpreted as follows: “Animals of all kinds, such as the birds who could fly, as well as those animals who were land-bound, including the four-footed ones such as the deer, and others such as the reptiles who move closer to earth—every sort of animal was deeply affected by the gloomy atmosphere that prevailed at the time so much so that they ate and drank nothing that day.”]

दो०. दोउ समाज निमिराजु रघुराजु नहाने प्रात ।

बैठे सब बट बिटप तर मन मलीन कृस गात ॥ २७७ ॥

dōhā.

dō'u samāja nimirāju raghurāju nahānē prāta.

baiṭhē saba baṭa biṭapa tara mana malīna kṛsa gāta. 277.

The next morning, all the members of the two communities, one belonging to the kingdom ruled by the descendants of king Nimi (i.e. the citizens of Janakpur), and the to the kingdom ruled by the descendants of king Raghu (i.e. the citizens of Ayodhya), took their bath and sat down under the shade of the huge banyan tree in the hermitage of Lord Ram (where it was a common practice that those who visited Lord Ram would assemble everyday for a meeting)¹.

Everyone's heart was heavy with a pall of gloom and sadness clouding it, and their bodies showed signs of weariness (which reflected their mental state marked by grief, despondency, sadness and uncertainty, and the physical distress of a long journey and prolonged fasting). (Doha no. 277)

[Note—¹There was a huge banyan tree in the center of the hermitage of Lord Ram under the shade of which visiting sages and hermits would assemble on a routine basis, almost daily, to interact with the Lord. Around the tree a platform was erected where everyone would sit and talk.

This tree acted as a landmark that was seen by Guha Nishad when he stood on a hill to look around and find the exact location of the Lord's abode to help Bharat proceed in that direction—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 237 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it.]

चौ०. जे महिसुर दसरथ पुर बासी । जे मिथिलापति नगर निवासी ॥ १ ॥

हंस बंस गुर जनक पुरोध । जिन्ह जग मगु परमारथु सोधा ॥ २ ॥

लगे कहन उपदेस अनेका । सहित धरम नय बिरति बिबेका ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

jē mahisura dasaratha pura bāsī. jē mithilāpati nagara nivāsī. 1.

hansa bansa gura janaka purōdhā. jinha jaga magu paramārathu sōdhā. 2.

lagē kahana upadēsa anēkā. sahita dharama naya birati bibēkā. 3.

As the grand assembly settled down, the learned Brahmins (mahisura) of both the kingdoms, i.e. those who lived in the city of king Dasrath as well as those who lived in the city of king Janak (i.e. Ayodhya and Janakpur respectively) ---, (1)

--- Including the guru and the chief priest of king Janak (i.e. sage Sadanand; “gura janaka purōdhā”), who was wise and enlightened and regarded as being pure as the legendary Swan (a bird used as a metaphor for wisdom and purity; “hansa bansa”), as well as other senior Brahmins who were enlightened and were in the know of the falsehood of this gross world and the path of spiritualism that grants eternal peace and beatitude ---, (2)

--- All of them got together to preach in a variety of ways in order to give solace, succour and comfort to the distraught assembly.

They used their wisdom and skills to expound upon the different principles of Dharma (right conduct and thought), elaborating on the many rules and regulations that are proper and appropriate for situations like the one faced by the people currently, as well as on the importance of practicing dispassion, detachment and renunciation in all matters related to this mundane existence in order to attain stability of the mind and peace for the soul. (3)

कौसिक कहि कहि कथा पुरानीं । समुझाई सब सभा सुबानीं ॥ ४ ॥

तब रघुनाथ कौसिकहि कहेऊ । नाथ कालि जल बिनु सबु रहेऊ ॥ ५ ॥

मुनि कह उचित कहत रघुराई । गयउ बीति दिन पहर अढ़ाई ॥ ६ ॥

kausika kahi kahi kathā purānīm. samujhā'ī saba sabhā subānīm. 4.
taba raghunātha kausikahi kahē'ū. nātha kāli jala binu sabu rahē'ū. 5.
muni kaha ucita kahata raghurā'ī. gaya'u bīti dina pahara aṛhā'ī. 6.

Meanwhile, the exalted sage Vishwamitra (kausika)¹ also lent a helping hand to pacify the assembly by narrating many different episodes from the ancient scriptures that had a resemblance to the current situation, explaining their meaning and relevance so that the people would find comfort by hearing them. (4)

Then Lord Ram (the Lord of the Raghus; “raghunātha”) told sage Vishwamitra (kausika): ‘Oh Lord (nātha), the people have not drunk (nor eaten) anything since yesterday.’ (5)

The sage (Vishwamitra) agreed with Lord Ram and said that what the Lord says is true, as a day and a half have already passed (bīti dina pahara aṛhā'ī) with everyone fasting². (6)

[Note—¹When king Janak was on his way to Chitrakoot, he visited sage Vishwamitra whose hermitage lay near the kingdom of Janakpur. We must remember that it was sage Vishwamitra who had taken Lord Ram and Laxman to Janakpur to attend the bow-breaking ceremony organized by king Janak, which culminated in Lord Ram and his three brothers marrying the four princesses of Janak’s household.

Janak decided to bring Vishwamitra along as he knew that the sage was highly respected by all members of king Dasrath’s family, especially Lord Ram and Laxman. So the king thought that in case someone was needed to preside over the conference that was sure to be held at Chitrakoot, and that ‘someone’ should be senior enough so that his word would be final and binding on all, especially upon Lord Ram, in case there was a logjam and no one could decide on any matter, then in this scenario sage Vishwamitra would play a crucial role. Further, his advice would be binding on Lord Ram as his own father, king Dasrath, had told Vishwamitra that he was like a father for Lord Ram and Laxman at the time he sent the two brothers with the sage to protect the latter’s fire sacrifice. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 208.}

Hence, it would be difficult, or well nigh impossible, for Lord Ram to defy sage Vishwamitra’s instructions. King Janak was very skeptical about sage Vasistha’s ability to actually enforce his word on anyone in Ayodhya, as was evident in his inability to stop Lord Ram from going to the forest, to declare null and void Kaikeyi’s demands as being an outrageous interference in matters of state, such as who would inherit the throne of the kingdom which was a matter to be decided by the council of ministers and not governed by squabbling in the royal family, as well as his utter failure to prevail upon Bharat to accept the crown in the absence of Lord Ram. Janak expected nothing from Vasistha. So in his wisdom he thought it prudent to take sage Vishwamitra along with him to Chitrakoot as he believed the sage had the needed influence upon Lord Ram and others to actually change the course of events if things went out of hand.

²The people hadn't eaten or drunk anything on day of their arrival at Lord's hermitage, which was yesterday, i.e. the day prior to this meeting*1. Now it was almost afternoon. Hence, the sage talked about 'a day and a half'. {*1 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precedes Doha no. 277.}]

रिषि रुख लखि कह तेरहुतिराजू । इहाँ उचित नहिँ असन अनाजू ॥ ७ ॥
कहा भूप भल सबहि सोहाना । पाइ रजायसु चले नहाना ॥ ८ ॥

riṣi rukha lakhi kaha tērahutirājū. ihām' ucita nahim asana anājū. 7.
kahā bhūpa bhala sabahi sōhānā. pā'i rajāyasu calē nahānā. 8.

Seeing what the sage meant or implied (that he wished the people ate something and break their fast), the king of Tirhut (i.e. king Janak; "tērahutirājū") intervened and suggested that it would not be proper for the people to partake of cereals (bread, rice etc.) here¹. (7)

The king's advice was liked by everyone and they readily agreed with him. Taking his permission, everyone went to take their evening bath. (8)

[Note—¹Why was it not proper for anyone to eat cereals in Lord Ram's hermitage at Chitrakoot? The reason is that during his stay in the forest, Lord Ram, Laxman and Sita had not eaten any kind of cereal in any form, cooked, boiled, roasted, sprouted or any other kind. They had to live like a hermit and as such had to survive on things available in the forest, such as fruits as well as edible stems, roots and flowers. We read in Ram Charit Manas that everyone who met Lord Ram had offered him such eatables—for instance there was Guha Nishad*1, then there were the villagers*2, the Kols and the Kirats*3, and later on Sabari, the old devotee whom Lord Ram blessed on his way to the forest*4.

So it would be highly improper for the people to light a fire and cook a full meal consisting of cereals and other things when Lord Ram himself abstained from it.

Another reason is that the general atmosphere was of grief and worry; it was not a picnic place for the party to cook and enjoy meals. Even the citizens of Ayodhya had been observing strict austerities while staying at Chitrakoot*5. What did the people of Ayodhya eat while they stayed at Chitrakoot? Well, they were well provided with fruits, stems, roots and other sweet eatables produced in the forest by the Kols, the Kirats and the Bhils*6.

In this situation, it would be highly improper for the citizens of Janakpur to engage in eating and drinking like they did when at home.

{Refer: *1 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 88.

*2 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 114 along with Chaupai line no. that follow it; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 120.

*3 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 135.

*4 = Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 34.

*5 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 247.

*6 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 250.}]

दो०. तेहि अवसर फल फूल दल मूल अनेक प्रकार ।
लड़ आए बनचर बिपुल भरि भरि काँवरि भार ॥ २७८ ॥
dōhā.

tēhi avasara phala phūla dala mūla anēka prakāra.
la'i ā'ē banacara bipula bhari bhari kām'vari bhāra. 278.

On that occasion, the forest-dwelling tribals brought in ample quantities of fruits, edible flowers, roots and stems of various kinds, all loaded in baskets tied to poles that were carried by them on their shoulders¹. (Doha no. 278)

[Note—¹Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 250. This was the occasion when the tribesmen had brought eatables for the people of Ayodhya when they arrived at Chitrakoot.

We must remark here how courteous and hospitable these humble and seemingly backward tribesmen were. They knew how to entertain their guests.

We have read that when Lord Ram arrived at Chitrakoot, these simple hearted folks had promised the Lord that they would always be ready to serve him, they would feel glad at it, and that he should never hesitate in seeking their service in any manner he deems fit—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 135—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 136.]

चौ०. कामद भे गिरि राम प्रसादा । अवलोकत अपहरत बिषादा ॥ १ ॥
सर सरिता बन भूमि बिभागा । जनु उमगत आनंद अनुरागा ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

kāmada bhē giri rāma prasādā. avalōkata apaharata biṣādā. 1.
sara saritā bana bhūmi bibhāgā. janu umagata ānam'da anurāgā. 2.

By the grace of Lord Ram, all the hills of Chitrakoot transformed themselves into an enthralling environment of exceptional beauty and magnificence that was cheering for the mind and the heart of the guests, satisfying all their desires for happiness, pleasures, comforts and peace.

Merely seeing them was an exhilarating experience, and the sight removed all their sorrows and grief. (1)

Everywhere there, in the lakes, the ponds and the rivers, in the surrounding forest and the ground below, it appeared that happiness, joy, love and pleasure were spilling all over the place¹. (2)

[Note—¹In this context, refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 137—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 139.

There is no wonder that such a miraculous transformation would be witnessed in Chitrakoot which was so fortunate as to find favour with Lord Ram who chose it to make it his abode in the forest*1, as well as the fact that it was the habitat of countless great sages, hermits and other pious souls who lived in its peaceful and serene environ to do Tapa, Yoga, Dhyan etc., i.e. to pursue all kinds of spiritual practices such as penance, austerities, meditation and contemplation*2, but we shall be reading by-and-by that even the spot where Lord Ram landed with his army in Lanka, which was otherwise a dry and cursed place inhabited by cruel and blood-thirsty demons, would transmew into a lush green mini-forest with trees of all seasons and species blooming with fruits and flowers and having an abundance of foliage to provide ample shade to the Lord's army, irrespective of whether or not it was the right season for them to bloom and bear fruits and flowers*3.

{Refer: *1 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 133; (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 134.

*2 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 133.

*3 = Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 5.}

A similar idea is found in Tulsidas' book "Dohawali", verse no. 173 which says that a person on whom Lord Ram shows his grace, all trees bloom and bear fruits and flowers for him irrespective of the season and the place.]

बेलि बिटप सब सफल सफूला । बोलत खग मृग अलि अनुकूला ॥ ३ ॥
तेहि अवसर बन अधिक उछाहू । त्रिबिध समीर सुखद सब काहू ॥ ४ ॥
जाइ न बरनि मनोहरताई । जनु महि करति जनक पहुनाई ॥ ५ ॥

bēli biṭapa saba saphala saphūlā. bōlata khaga mṛga ali anukūlā. 3.
tēhi avasara bana adhika uchāhū. tribidha samīra sukhada saba kāhū. 4.
jā'i na barani manōharatā'ī. janu mahi karati janaka pahunā'ī. 5.

Trees and creepers were laden with fruits and flowers. Birds, animals and black bees made cheerful sounds (indicative of their happiness and contentedness. (3)

The wind that blew was fragrant, soft and sweet, and it gave comfort to everyone.

All in all, the place overflowed with auspiciousness and cheerfulness, and pulsated with positive energy during that time when the citizens of Janakpur and Ayodhya came to visit Lord Ram at Chitrakoot. (4)

The beauty, charm and magnificence of Chitrakoot (as well as the comfort and pleasure provided by the place) cannot be described sufficiently, and it appeared that the Earth itself was doing its best to personally play a gracious host to king Janak and extend warm hospitality to him and his entourage in the best possible way it could be done. (5)

तब सब लोग नहाइ नहाई । राम जनक मुनि आयसु पाई ॥ ६ ॥
देखि देखि तरुबर अनुरागे । जहँ तहँ पुरजन उतरन लागे ॥ ७ ॥

दल फल मूल कंद बिधि नाना । पावन सुंदर सुधा समाना ॥ ८ ॥

taba saba lōga nahā'i nahā'ī. rāma janaka muni āyasu pā'ī. 6.
dēkhi dēkhi tarubara anurāgē. jaham'taham't purajana utarana lāgē. 7.
dala phala mūla kanda bidhi nānā. pāvana sundara sudhā samānā. 8.

Then the citizens of Janakpur took their bath to refresh themselves, and after receiving permission from Lord Ram, king Janak and the sages present there (i.e. sages Sadanand, Vasistha, Vishwamitra and others), they began to select places under trees that they liked, and pitched their camps there. (6-7)

Meanwhile, abundant quantities of fruits, edible roots and stems and bulbs of all kinds, that were fresh, sweet and nectarine by nature, were made available to them.
[How? This is narrated in the next verse that follows herein below.] (8)

दो०. सादर सब कहँ रामगुर पठए भरि भरि भार ।
पूजि पितर सुर अतिथि गुर लगे करन फरहार ॥ २७९ ॥
dōhā.

sādara saba kaham'rāmagura paṭha'e bhari bhari bhāra.
pūji pitara sura atithi gura lagē karana pharahāra. 279.

The guru of Lord Ram, i.e. sage Vasistha, sent an abundant amount of such eatables and refreshments to the guests (i.e. the citizens of Janakpur), in basketfuls, and with due honour to them.

The guests first offered their oblations to their respective ancestors and gods by offering them the food that was brought for them, and thereafter they began to partake themselves of the food that was sent to them by the courtesy of sage Vasistha. (Doha no. 279)

चौ०. एहि बिधि बासर बीते चारी । रामु निरखि नर नारि सुखारी ॥ १ ॥
दुहु समाज असि रुचि मन माहीं । बिनु सिय राम फिरब भल नाहीं ॥ २ ॥
caupā'ī.

ēhi bidhi bāsara bītē cārī. rāmu nirakhi nara nāri sukhārī. 1.
duhu samāja asi ruci mana māhīm. binu siya rāma phiraba bhala nāhīm. 2.

In this way (ēhi bidhi)¹, four days were spent as the people, the males and the females, found great comfort and joy as they watched Lord Ram and enjoyed his company. (1)

The two societies (i.e. the citizens of Ayodhya as well as of Janakpur) had one desire in their minds, which was that it would not be good to return home without Lord Ram and Sita accompanying them. (2)

[Note—¹“This way”; what way; what was the routine of the people while they stayed at Chitrakoot? Well, they would get up early morning, take their bath and perform their daily worship routine. Then they would assemble under the banyan tree and sit around Lord Ram, listening to discourses by various sages present on the occasion. In the afternoon, they would take their second bath of the day, and then some would take rest, while others would go roaming in the charming environment of Chitrakoot, enjoying its scenic beauty. Some would sit huddled together to discuss the situation and debate on the future course of action. In the evening, they would take their evening bath, then eat something, such as fruits, bulbs and other forest produce available to them, and then retire for the day in their respective camps.

The fact that the people took bath ‘three times a day in river Mandakini’ is explicitly stated in Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 280 herein below.]

सीता राम संग बनबासू । कोटि अमरपुर सरिस सुपासू ॥ ३ ॥
परिहरि लखन रामु बैदेही । जेहि घरु भाव बाम बिधि तेही ॥ ४ ॥

sītā rāma saṅga banabāsū. kōṭi amarapura sarisa supāsū. 3.
parihari lakhana rāmu baidēhī. jēhi gharu bhāva bāma bidhi tēhī. 4.

The people were of an unanimous view that to live in the forest in the company of Lord Ram and Sita would be as auspicious and welcomed as an opportunity to live in the heaven. (3)

And anyone who likes to live in his home without Lord Ram and Sita (Vaidehi, the daughter of king Videha, i.e. Janak) being around is indeed very unfortunate, and surely the Creator is deemed to be against the well-being of such a person.¹ (4)

[Note—¹The idea expressed in these two verses find a resonance in what Sumitra had told her son Laxman while granting her permission to him to accompany Lord Ram*1, as well as the citizens of Ayodhya who decided to follow the Lord out of the city at the time of his departure for the forest*2. Later on, sage Vasistha tells Lord Ram a similar thing when the Lord went to meet him prior to the grand conference that was to be held later that day at Chitrakoot*3.

{Refer: *1 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precede Doha no. 74; (ii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 75.

*2 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 84 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede it.

*3 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 290 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it.}]

दाहिन दड़उ होइ जब सबही । राम समीप बसिअ बन तबही ॥ ५ ॥
मंदाकिनि मज्जनु तिहु काला । राम दरसु मुद मंगल माला ॥ ६ ॥

dāhina da'i'u hō'i jaba sabahī. rāma samīpa basi'a bana tabahī. 5.
mandākini majjanu tihu kālā. rāma darasu muda maṅgala mālā. 6.

The people said: ‘Verily indeed, it is only when the Gods are favourable towards a person that it becomes possible for that person to get an opportunity to live in the company of Lord Ram in the forest.

[To wit, a person who is able to accompany Lord Ram wherever the Lord goes, forest or no forest, is indeed very lucky and blessed. Surely the Gods are favourably inclined towards him, for otherwise this privilege is not possible even in one’s dreams.]¹ (5)

We shall take a bath in the holy waters of river Mandakini three times a day (morning, noon and evening), and spend our time in close company of Lord Ram, enjoying the privilege of watching him to our heart’s content as it is the root of all kinds of auspiciousness, joy and happiness. [Say, what more would anyone want in his or her life if not this opportunity?] (6)

[Note—¹In this context, refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 113; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 120; (iii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 122; (iv) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 124.]

अटनु राम गिरि बन तापस थल । असनु अमिअ सम कंद मूल फल ॥ ७ ॥

सुख समेत संबत दुइ साता । पल सम होहिं न जनिअहिं जाता ॥ ८ ॥

aṭanu rāma giri bana tāpasa thala. asanu ami'a sama kanda mūla phala. 7.
sukha samēta sambata du'i sātā. pala sama hōhim na jani'ahim jātā. 8.

We shall go sight seeing and roam around in the hills and the forests near this place (in Chitrakoot) where Lord Ram lives, and visit the numerous hermitages of great sages, hermits and other pious souls who abound around here.

We shall partake of nectar-like fruits, edible roots and stems and other eatables offered by the forest in abundance. (7)

In this way, we shall pass the fourteen years of Lord’s forest exile in a utopian world where joy and happiness is available aplenty, and this being the case, the long years would fly as if they were merely some moments, without our even noticing them go by.

[Then say, why should we return home if Lord Ram does not accompany us? Well, we are better off here.]’ (8)

दो०. एहि सुख जोग न लोग सब कहहिं कहाँ अस भागु ।

सहज सुभायँ समाज दुहु राम चरन अनुरागु ॥ २८० ॥

dōhā.

ēhi sukha jōga na lōga saba kahahim kahām̐ asa bhāgu.
sahaja subhāyam̐ samāja duhu rāma carana anurāgu. 280.

While welcoming the possibility of such a great and good fortune actually becoming a reality for them, the two societies or communities (i.e. the citizens of Ayodhya and Janakpur) however were skeptical of this happening in practice, for they regretted that they were not so lucky to be able to enjoy this rarest of rare privilege.

In this way, the two peoples contemplated and rued over the dilemma they were in and the piquant situation they faced even as love and affection for the holy feet of Lord Ram overwhelmed their conscience¹. (Doha no. 280)

[Note—¹Given a choice, the citizens would have whole-heartedly preferred to stay in the forest with Lord Ram for the fourteen years he was supposed to live there in accordance with the mandate of his father, king Dasrath, but unfortunately it was not going to be so. The Lord had other important things on his mind—and the chief issue that overrode every other concern for him was the need to go deeper into the forest and start the mission of elimination of the demons one by one, something that could not be accomplished by staying put at Chitrakoot.

This was a secret mission, and none of the citizens were aware of it. However, only sage Vasistha was privy to it because he was the son of the creator Brahma, and his father did tell him all about the mission of Lord Ram when he asked his son, sage Vasistha, to accept the chance to serve Lord Ram by becoming the chief priest of Ayodhya. This is clearly mentioned by Vasistha himself in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 48—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 50.

Obviously, this is the precise reason why sage Vasistha had not interfered with Lord Ram going to the forest, and neither did he assertively exercise his powers and authority to nullify Kaikeyi's demands that forced king Dasrath to send the Lord to the forest, because sage Vasistha wanted to help the Lord to accomplish his mission instead of creating hurdles in his path.]

चौ०. एहि बिधि सकल मनोरथ करहीं । बचन सप्रेम सुनत मन हरहीं ॥ १ ॥
सीय मातु तेहि समय पठाई । दासीं देखि सुअवसरु आई ॥ २ ॥
सावकास सुनि सब सिय सासू । आयउ जनकराज रनिवासू ॥ ३ ॥
कौसल्याँ सादर सनमानी । आसन दिए समय सम आनी ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

ēhi bidhi sakala manōratha karahīm. bacana saprēma sunata mana harahīm.

1.

sīya mātu tēhi samaya paṭhā'īm. dāsīm dēkhi su'avasarū ā'īm. 2.

sāvakāsa suni saba siya sāsū. āya'u janakarāja ranivāsū. 3.

kausalyām' sādara sanamānī. āsana di'ē samaya sama ānī. 4.

In this way (as narrated in the forgoing verses), the people wished the course of events would turn favourable for them, and their words were so much soaked in the nectarine virtues of love and affection for Lord Ram that anyone who heard them also felt the same sort of exhilaration in his heart. (1)

Meanwhile, some of the maids of the mother of Sita (i.e. queen Sunayana, the wife of king Janak), who were sent by her to the camp of her sister queens from Ayodhya, came to the latter as soon as they got an opportunity to do so. They bought the news that their queen (Sunayana) wants to pay a visit. (2-3)

Hearing that the mothers-in-law of Sita were free to attend her, the mother of Sita came to the former's camp.

Kaushalya welcomed her guest with due honour, and respectfully gave her a seat to sit down. (4)

सीलु सनेहु सकल दुहु ओरा । द्रवहिं देखि सुनि कुलिस कठोरा ॥ ५ ॥
पुलक सिथिल तन बारि बिलोचन । महि नख लिखन लगीं सब सोचन ॥ ६ ॥

sīlu sanēhu sakala duhu ōrā. dravahim dēkhi suni kulisa kaṭhōrā. 5.
pulaka sithila tana bāri bilōcana. mahi nakha likhana lagīm saba sōcana. 6.

There was an excess of courtesy and affection on both the sides, and the two queens met each other with such warmth that even the hardest of souls would be mellowed if it witnessed the interaction between them. (5)

Their bodies were thrilled and tears gushed out of their eyes. They had their eyes fixed on the ground before them even as they scratched it with the nails of their toes because they were so overcome with emotions that they did not know how to start a conversation.¹ (6)

[Note—¹This meeting between Sunayana and Kaushalya was held in the backdrop of a great tragedy that had struck the two families. King Dasrath had died, leaving Kaushalya and his other queens widowed; Lord Ram and Sita were sent to the forest which directly affected both the families as Sita was the daughter of king Janak and Lord Ram a son of king Dasrath. This meeting was sort of a condolence meeting held between the two royal families for the first time after Dasrath's death. The atmosphere was of mourning and grief. Hence, the imagery painted here refers to that atmosphere.

A similar narration of Sita sitting down with a lowered head, staring at the ground before her, weeping and scratching the ground with her toe nails is described in Ram Charit Manas and pertains to the time when Sita went to Kaushalya as soon as she learnt that her husband, Lord Ram, was going to the forest. Sita wanted to accompany the Lord, but she was in a fix as how to seek permission from her mother-in-law in this regard. Looking down, weeping and scratching the ground with the nails of the toe without saying anything are gestures indicative of nervousness and shyness, with its attendant inability to boldly express what is in one's mind. {Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-7 that precede Doha no. 58.}]

सब सिय राम प्रीति कि सि मूरति । जनु करुना बहु बेष बिसूरति ॥ ७ ॥
सीय मातु कह बिधि बुधि बाँकी । जो पय फेनु फोर पबि टाँकी ॥ ८ ॥

saba siya rāma prīti ki si mūrati. janu karunā bahu bēṣa bisūrati. 7.
sīya mātu kaha bidhi budhi bām̐kī. jō paya phēnu phōra pabi ṭām̐kī. 8.

Everyone was like a living image of the virtues of love and affection for Lord Ram and Sita. They appeared to be a personification of pity and sadness that marked the occasion. (7)

The mother of Sita (i.e. Sunayana) rued that the ways of the Creator are often very crude and rude inasmuch as he uses the sharp razor-like edge of Vajra (the weapon of Indra, the king of the gods) to cut through the foam that forms on the surface of milk¹. (8)

[Note—¹The foam on the surface of milk is extremely soft and delicate. To use a sharp instrument to cut through it shows how cruel and heartless the person who does it is. In this case, Sunayana accuses the Creator for being unwarrantedly harsh on everyone—for he has laid one tragedy upon another in quick succession so that no one gets time to breathe.]

दो०. सुनिअ सुधा देज़िअहिं गरल सब करतूति कराल ।
जहँ तहँ काक उलूक बक मानस सकृत मराल ॥ २८१ ॥

dōhā.

sunī'a sudhā dēkhi'ahim̐ garala saba karatūti karāla.
jaham̐ taham̐ kāka ulūka baka mānasa sakṛta marāla. 281.

[Resenting the cruel, unpredictable and crafty ways the Creator works, and of his of being malicious towards ordinary creatures by creating unnecessary delusions for them so that the latter finds it hard to distinguish between the truth and the falsehood which in turn would serve the Creator well in his crooked plans to keep the creature trapped in a web of delusions and falsehood, the distraught queen Sunayana expresses her frustration as follows—]

‘The Creator produces a delusion that would mislead everyone, for he creates a situation where one would hear that nectar is present somewhere, but when one actually approaches it, it turns out to be a poison¹.

All his (Creator’s) workings and actions are whimsical and harsh; they defy reasoning and logic. For instance, he has created countless birds of a variety of feathers that fill the entire world around us, birds such as crows, owls and herons that are of no good, but the swan, which is regarded as a symbol of purity and cleanliness, is limited to a distant lake known as Maan-Sarovar (located far away in the higher reaches of the Himalayas) which is difficult for the common man to reach². (Doha no. 281)

[Note—¹A similar idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 49; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 119.

²The Creator does not want creatures to be happy; he does not want them to live in good company and derive pleasure thereby; he would always create a situation that cause unnecessary tension and vexation for the creature. He created birds of so many different varieties, but all have some or the other kind of fault in them. He did create a fine bird known as the 'swan', but regretfully limited it to a far-away lake in the higher reaches of the Himalayan mountain range, making it almost out of reach of the common man. So what good does it serve? Could he not have made the swan live amongst the common folks instead of filling the world with worthless species of birds?

The remorseful queen Sunayana, the mother of Sita, means that while every other member of king Dasrath's household was good natured, Kaikeyi turned out to be the dark spot in it. She was like that malicious Creator who becomes jealous of his own creation, for he does not like his creatures to live a peaceful and contented life. Kaikeyi could not bear that the citizens would live a happy and contented life under Lord Ram's reign, the Lord who was a fountainhead of compassion, grace, love and benevolence, but like the malicious Creator she became jealous of them, and hence threw the spanner in the wheel by suddenly upturning the whole cart and creating a situation which was just the opposite of what the citizens had hoped for. Instead of happiness and joy, the citizens were burdened by grief and lamentations, courtesy the malicious and crooked ways of Kaikeyi.

Here, Sunayana has used the Creator as a medium to vent her disgust and repugnance for Kaikeyi, at her malicious nature and evil actions.]

चौ०. सुनि ससोच कह देबि सुमित्रा । बिधि गति बड़ि बिपरीत बिचित्रा ॥ १ ॥

जो सृजि पालइ हरइ बहोरी । बाल केलि सम बिधि मति भोरी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

suni sasōca kaha dēbi sumitrā. bidhi gati baḍi biparīta bicitrā. 1.
jō srji pāla'i hara'i bahōrī. bāla kēli sama bidhi mati bhōrī. 2.

Hearing what queen Sunayana had said, Sumitra (the mother of Laxman) too endorsed her view, lamenting that the ways of the Creator (bidhi) were indeed, more often than not, very strange, unpredictable and malicious¹. (1)

It is such an ironical situation that the Creator is the one who creates this world, but instead of having any affection and compassionate feeling for it, he enjoys destroying his own creation, first causing its ruin and then recreating it once again to repeat the cycle over and over again, without having any regrets, and as if he is not certain of what he wants to do, just like a mischievous child who would make and destroy many shapes out of clay or plaster while playing with it². (2)

[Note—¹There are umpteen numbers of verses in Ram Charit Manas that express the same idea. For instance: Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 47; (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 48; (iii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 49; (iv) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 58; (v) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 76; (vi) Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 119; (vii) Chanda line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 201; (viii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 202; (ix) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 206.

²A child would make so many figures with clay or plaster, and then break it to remodel another set of figures according to its fancy. The child has no regrets over destroying its own creation. Similarly, the Creator (Bidhi) has no compunctions in repeatedly doing and undoing his own creation; he neither regrets nor has any feeling for the sufferings he is causing to others.]

कौसल्या कह दोसु न काहू । करम बिबस दुख सुख छति लाहू ॥ ३ ॥

कठिन करम गति जान बिधाता । जो सुभ असुभ सकल फल दाता ॥ ४ ॥

kausalyā kaha dōsu na kāhū. karama bibasa dukha sukha chati lāhū. 3.
kaṭhina karama gati jāna bidhātā. jō subha asubha sakala phala dātā. 4.

Kaushalya (the mother of Lord Ram) however showed wisdom, forbearance, tolerance and patience when she said: ‘I feel no one ought to be blamed for anything, for all sorrows and joys are dependent upon one’s deeds that beget results that conform to the nature of the deed itself¹. (3)

The Creator has a difficult and tough task before him: he knows the type of deed a creature does, and what kind of reward or punishment he is entitled to in accordance with the deeds done by him. So, the Creator is left with no choice, for it is obligatory for him to reward or punish the creature according to the auspicious or the evil deed done by him respectively². (4)

[Note—¹An exactly similar philosophy has been expressed by Laxman when he comforted and pacified the sorrowful Guha Nishad at Sringeripur: refer to Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 92—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 93.

Even the guru of the gods has reiterated this view in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 219.

Refer also to Sumantra’s similar observation in this respect in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 150.

²Mother Kaushalya shows high level of wisdom here. She defends the Creator and says that it is wrong to blame him for all the misfortunes faced by the world. The Creator is himself bound by certain protocols; he has to conform to the laws and regulations he himself has laid down to regulate the functioning of the world he created, for otherwise there would be total chaos and anarchy. If the Creator punishes someone for the latter’s misdeeds, there is no use in grumbling, for the punished creature must realize that justice is being done to him, and it is he himself who is to be blamed for the misfortunes that have befallen him, and not the Creator, as the latter is simply doing his duty as a neutral judge.

In this context, refer to the advice Sumantra, the chief minister, had given king Dasrath in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 150. This advice resonates with what Kaushalya says now.]

ईस रजाइ सीस सबही कें । उत्पति थिति लय बिषहु अमी कें ॥ ५ ॥

देबि मोह बस सोचिअ बादी । बिधि प्रपंचु अस अचल अनादी ॥ ६ ॥

īsa rajā'i sīsa sabahī kēm. utapati thiti laya biṣahu amī kēm. 5.
dēbi mōha basa sōci'a bādī. bidhi prapaṇcu asa acala anādī. 6.

One must honour the Will of God, for whatever he ordains is to be accepted respectfully¹. Everything in this world, every aspect of it, right from its origin, its sustenance to its destruction, is in the hand of the Supreme Lord. Whether a situation is liked or not by someone, whether it is nectar-like or poison-like, no purpose will be served by grumbling and complaining against the Lord. (5)

Oh honourable lady (dēbi)! There is no purpose served by falling prey to delusions, and unnecessarily lamenting and expressing resentment—for the ways of the Creator has been the same ever since the creation came into being, from time immemorial, and would continue the same way till eternity.

[This being an irrefutable fact of existence, what is the use of lamenting and regretting and expressing frustration over things over which one has no influence or control? Such attitude would only aggravate matters and make them unbearable, while showing calmness, courage, patience, resilience and forbearance would help one to overcome adversities easily.]' (6)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 255.]

भूपति जिअब मरब उर आनी । सोचिअ सखि लखि निज हित हानी ॥ ७ ॥

सीय मातु कह सत्य सुबानी । सुकृती अवधि अवधपति रानी ॥ ८ ॥

bhūpati ji'aba maraba ura ānī. sōci'a sakhi lakhi nija hita hānī. 7.
sīya mātu kaha satya subānī. sukṛtī avadhi avadhapati rānī. 8.

[Addressing queen Sunayana, mother Kaushalya continued—] 'Oh dear friend (sakhi)! Remembering king Dasrath and regretting at his death is futile and driven by worldly considerations of gain or loss¹. (7)

The mother of Sita (sīya mātu; queen Sunayana) said: 'Yes, what you have said is true. You are very noble and an epitome of virtues, and it behooves of you to speak such nice words of wisdom as you are the wife of the illustrious king of Ayodhya (king Dasrath). [Being the queen of king Dasrath and the mother of Lord Ram, it is expected of you that you would speak such enlightened words imbued with wisdom and spiritual philosophy.]' (8)

[Note—¹To wit, the soul has no relations whatever, and every individual lives his or her own life independently, interacting with others only as much as is needed to fulfill one's worldly obligations, and nothing more. We regret at king Dasrath's death because he was the guardian and patriarch of the family, and with his death we have lost our great lord and king known for his excellent virtues and exemplary glories, even as we have become widows due to his death. But come to think of it from the

perspective of spiritualism and metaphysics, and we discover that it is wrong to think so. His soul fulfilled its duties and exited from the world; the gross physical body of Dasrath was not his true identity as it is of no living being, for the truth of the matter is that the real ‘self’ of any individual, of any living being, is the person’s soul that is also known as the Atma. King Dasrath had lived an auspicious life, and he died in the remembrance of Lord Ram. What better death can one expect to have? Hence, there is no sense in regretting for him.] (7)

दो०. लखनु रामु सिय जाहुँ बन भल परिनाम न पोचु ।
गहबरि हियँ कह कौसिला मोहि भरत कर सोचु ॥ २८२ ॥

dōhā.

lakhanu rāmu siya jāhum̐ bana bhala parināma na pōcu.
gahabari hiyam̐ kaha kausilā mōhi bharata kara sōcu. 282.

[The queens contemplated over the available options before them with respect to what possible things could be done in order to resolve the vexed question faced by everyone regarding the prospect of Lord Ram returning home.]

Kaushalya sighed and said: ‘Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman proceeding to the forest may be a good thing, and certainly not something bad (as the Lord would be obeying the words of his father, which is an honourable thing to do).

But what worries me most is the consequences it would have on Bharat, for I feel greatly concerned about his well-being and how he will cope with the prospect of being separated from them (for fourteen long years).’ (Doha no. 282)

चौ०. ईस प्रसाद असीस तुम्हारी । सुत सुतबधू देवसरि बारी ॥ १ ॥
राम सपथ मैं कीन्हि न काऊ । सो करि कहउँ सखी सति भाऊ ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

īsa prasāda asīsa tumhārī. suta sutabadhū dēvasari bārī. 1.
rāma sapatha maim̐ kīnhi na kā'ū. sō kari kaha'um̐ sakhī sati bhā'ū. 2.

[Kaushalya continued to address Sunayana—] ‘By the grace of God and your blessings, I have been very fortunate to have a son (Lord Ram) and a daughter-in-law (Sita) who are stellar examples of virtues and excellent character, making them as worthy of respect and praise as the waters of the holy river Ganges (“dēvasari bārī”; the river of the gods). (1)

My dear friend (sakhī)! I have never taken any oath in the name of Lord Ram, I have never sworn in his name, but I may take the liberty to do so today as what I say now (in the verses that follow herein below) is absolutely true and sincere, and therefore I may be excused for invoking the name of my dear son Lord Ram so as to certify my sincerity and good faith in what I have to say. (2)

भरत सील गुन बिनय बड़ाई । भायप भगति भरोस भलाई ॥ ३ ॥
 कहत सारदहु कर मति हीचे । सागर सीप कि जाहिं उलीचे ॥ ४ ॥
 जानउँ सदा भरत कुलदीपा । बार बार मोहि कहेउ महीपा ॥ ५ ॥
 कसें कनकु मनि पारिखि पाएँ । पुरुष परिखिअहिं समयँ सुभाएँ ॥ ६ ॥

bharata sīla guṇa binaya baṛā'ī. bhāyapa bhagati bharōsa bhalā'ī. 3.
 kahata sāradahū kara mati hīcē. sāgara sīpa ki jāhiṁ ulīcē. 4.
 jāna'um' sadā bharata kuladīpā. bāra bāra mōhi kahē'u mahīpā. 5.
 kasēm kanaku mani pārikhi pā'ēm'. puruṣa parikhi'ahiṁ samayaṁ' subhā'ēm'.
 6.

[In these verses, Kaushalya praises Bharat in laudatory terms and expresses her immense appreciation for him.]

‘Verily indeed, in all sooth and without gainsay, Bharat’s courteous, amiable and polite nature, his immaculate character and excellent virtues, his glories and noble values, are truly great and exemplary, and so is his devotion for his elder brother (Lord Ram).

It will be good for everyone to have faith in Bharat and his integrity, and to rely on him in all matters (because no matter what, Bharat will stand firm in his values, and he will never fall prey to temptations or delusions of any kind). (3)

Even the goddess of knowledge and speech, i.e. goddess Sharda (Saraswati), would falter and fail to sufficiently praise Bharat’s glories. Say, is it ever possible to scoop out the water of the ocean by using the shell of an oyster as a ladle?

[To wit, even as it is impossible to empty the water of the ocean by using the small shell of an oyster, so it is also impossible to enumerate the virtues and glories of Bharat in its entirety. One can just say that it is enough to trust him and offer one’s reverence to him.] (4)

I have always recognized Bharat as being like a lamp in the family, someone who shows light to others by his own example. Nay, even the king (Dasrath) had always said so to me.

[To wit, whenever we had a private audience with each other and discussed different matters at a personal level, my husband was all praise for Bharat. Even when Kaikeyi had revealed her dark side and demanded that Bharat be appointed as the crown prince, the king was very willing to do so. The only thing that troubled him was why Lord Ram should be banished to the forest for no fault of his¹. But even in that, the king had no doubt about Bharat’s innocence.] (5)

Just like the purity of gold is determined by rubbing it on the touchstone (kasēm kanaku) and the value of a gem can only be determined by an expert jeweller (mani pārikhi pā'ēm'), so is the character and worth of a person becomes known only when the time comes to test him (puruṣa parikhi'ahiṁ samayaṁ' subhā'ēm').

[To wit, though we all had great respect for Bharat and always praised and trusted him, but his true worth and immaculate character shone like the radiance of the sun only when he was tested on the touchstone of time, for as soon as he came to know what evil has been done in his name by none other but his own mother, he was utterly dismayed and shocked beyond belief so much so that he had sternly upbraided

his mother and her co-conspirator, the maid named Manthra², vowing never to see her face for the rest of his life³. He had bluntly refused to accept the crown even though everyone amongst the council of ministers, including his own guru sage Vasistha, tried to persuade him to accept it, saying that his only good lies in serving Lord Ram. He determined to proceed to the forest to meet the Lord and bring him back home⁴. Not only that, the way he behaved throughout the long journey to Chitrakoot, and even brushed aside sage Bharadwaj's attempts to test his nature by tempting him with the offer of worldly comforts⁵, speaks volume for his excellent character. All these incidents prove the truth of the adage that only time helps to test a person's real character, for had thing been smooth and Kaikeyi hadn't created the mischief she did, Lord Ram would have ascended the throne and there would have been no chance to test Bharat's true character. In fact, what seemed to be unfortunate events by others was actually a boon for Bharat, as these events brought out the shine in Bharat's character and unequivocally established his glories in the realm of history, to be cherished for all times to come.] (6)

[Note—¹Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 31—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 32.

²Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 160—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 163.

³Refer to: (a) Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 162; (b) Geetawali Ramayan, Uttar Kand, verse no. 37.

⁴Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 174—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 183.

⁵Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 213—to Doha no. 215.]

अनुचित आजु कहब अस मोरा । सोक सनेहँ सयानप थोरा ॥ ७ ॥

सुनि सुरसरि सम पावनि बानी । भई सनेह बिकल सब रानी ॥ ८ ॥

anucita āju kahaba asa mōrā. sōka sanēham' sayānapa thōrā. 7.
suni surasari sama pāvani bānī. bha'īm sanēha bikala saba rānī. 8.

But I do acknowledge that whatever I have said in favour of Bharat is not at all sufficient to describe how noble and a thorough gentleman he actually is, because when someone is in grief and overcome with the burden of sorrow, one's wisdom is clouded, and one loses one's ability to express one's true feeling sufficiently and in clear terms.

[To wit, Bharat is so nice and so thoroughly a gentleman that all that I have said in his favour is just like scratching the surface of his glories. This is because I am so overwhelmed with sorrow and grief that I am not able to do full justice to him in his praise.]' (7)

Hearing these words of Kaushalya, words that were as pure and rejuvenating as the waters of the holy river Ganges, all the queens¹ felt exhilarated with a surge of affection for Bharat. (8)

[Note—¹One point is to be remarked here—and it is that this meeting was attended by queens Sunayana, the mother of Sita and the wife of king Janak, Kaushalya, the mother of Lord Ram, and Sumitra, the mother of Laxman. But Kaikeyi was absent; no mention of her is made anywhere.

The reason is that she was so ashamed of herself and overcome with a sense of guilt*1 that she preferred to hide herself in her camp and avoid public glare. She was stared at with contempt and repugnance by anyone who happened to be near her. One selfish act of Kaikeyi, at the instigation of her wicked maid Manthra, had made her a pariah for the rest of her life. {*1 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 273.}]

दो०. कौसल्या कह धीर धरि सुनुहु देबि मिथिलेसि ।

को बिबेकनिधि बल्लभहि तुम्हहि सकइ उपदेसि ॥ २८३ ॥

dōhā.

kausalyā kaha dhīra dhari sunahu dēbi mithilēsi.

kō bibēkanidhi ballabhahi tumhahi saka'i upadēsi. 283.

Kaushalya politely told queen Sunayana: 'Oh respected and honourable queen. Thou art the wife of a wise and enlightened king Janak, so who can advise you as to what the truth is and what is not.

[To wit, since thy husband, king Janak, is so highly knowledgeable and wise, it is naturally expected that whatever I have told thee about Bharat must be already known to thee. I had no intention to try to remove any doubts that thou might have vis-à-vis Bharat and his character, for I know that thou art fully aware of the facts and that nothing is hidden from thee. Yet, I took the liberty to vent my feelings before thy honourable self just in a friendly manner as part of a courteous conversation, and there is nothing more to it.]' (Doha no. 283)

[Note—Kaushalya felt that it might have been wrong on her part to focus her entire conversation with Sunayana exclusively in praising the character of Bharat as if Janak's family harboured some sort of doubt about him, and therefore it ought to be clarified that Bharat was a nice person and not the villain as he may appear to be.

So, Kaushalya collected herself and made up for her seemingly unnecessary comments regarding Bharat. She thought that it would have been more better if she had asked about the welfare of king Janak and his family, about how they fared, and about the next course of action, instead of spending her time praising Bharat as if she was consciously trying to cover up his guilt and hide his subtle bad character by polishing it with superficial praise.]

चौ०. रानि राय सन अवसरु पाई । अपनी भाँति कहब समुझाई ॥ १ ॥

रखिअहिं लखनु भरतु गवनहिं बन । जौं यह मत मानै महीप मन ॥ २ ॥

तौ भल जतनु करब सुबिचारी । मोरें सोचु भरत कर भारी ॥ ३ ॥
गूढ़ सनेह भरत मन माहीं । रहें नीक मोहि लागत नाही ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

rāni rāya sana avasaru pā'ī. apanī bhāmṭi kahaba samujhā'ī. 1.
rakhi'ahim lakhanu bharatu gavanahim bana. jaurm yaha mata mānai
mahīpa mana. 2.
tau bhala jatanu karaba subicārī. mōrēm sōcu bharata kara bhārī. 3.
gūrha sanēha bharata mana māhīm. rahēm nīka mōhi lāgata nāhīm. 4.

[Kaushalya continued—] ‘Oh queen (Sunayana)! Whenever you find an opportunity, please speak to the king (Janak) and give him an advice as if you were speaking on your own initiative.

[Let him feel that this advice is from your side, and don't give him any hint that I have suggested it to you, for it would not look nice and decent if he comes to know that I have asked you to speak to him on my behalf. Since you are his wife, you have the right to discuss things with him in confidence. See, after the death of king Dasrath, king Janak is the most senior member of our two families, and therefore it becomes obligatory for him to intervene in this matter resolutely, with a firm mind.]
(1)

Advise him that it would be good to keep Laxman and send Bharat to the forest with Lord Ram¹, if this option appears proper to the king for implementation. [Just make this suggestion to king Janak, and tell him that if he thinks it proper and fit, it can be done this way to resolve the vexed issue.] (2)

So, if the king finds this option right and proper after due diligence and paying careful thought to it, then he must make an effort to give effect to it.

I am very worried about Bharat and his fate (because I fear that if he is compelled to return to Ayodhya without Lord Ram, then he may die just like his father had died in grief of separation from Lord Ram). (3)

Verily, Bharat has deep sense of love for Lord Ram, and I have serious doubts if he would like to live at home without the Lord; I have apprehension of some grave consequences unfolding with regard to this matter.’ (4)

[Note—¹We have already read that sage Vasistha has also made similar suggestions, and it was gladly accepted by Bharat*1.

Bharat himself had made a similar offer to Lord Ram*2, and so if it was proposed to him officially, he would grab the opportunity with all cheer.

{Refer: *1 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 256 along with Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede it.

*2 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 268 along with Chaupai line no. 2 that follow it.}]

लखि सुभाउ सुनि सरल सुबानी । सब भइ मगन करुन रस रानी ॥ ५ ॥
नभ प्रसून झरि धन्य धन्य धुनि । सिथिल सनेहँ सिद्ध जोगी मुनि ॥ ६ ॥

lakhi subhā'u suni sarala subānī. saba bha'i magana karuna rasa rānī. 5.
nabha prasūna jhari dhan'ya dhan'ya dhuni. sithila sanēham' sid'dha jōgī
muni. 6.

Seeing how simple hearted Kaushalya was and hearing her unpretentious words, all those who were present there were overwhelmed with respect for her, declaring that she was an embodiment of compassion, kindness and grace¹. (5)

Flowers showered down on her from the sky² even as applause for her resonated in all the directions. Even great mystics, recluses and sages felt overwhelmed with affection for her (Kaushalya). (6)

[Note—¹Kaushalya's sincerity was very infective; it was evident to all that what she was saying came from the depth of her heart. Her facial expression and gestures, and the unpretentious way she expressed that she fears for the welfare of Bharat more than anything else, as well as her lavish praise for him in the face of his being the primary cause for her own son Lord Ram being sent to the forest and made to endure so much hardships there, made all those who heard her very appreciative of Kaushalya's greatness and the nobility of her heart.

²The gods had showered flowers on Kaushalya from the heavens.]

सबु रनिवासु बिथकि लिख रहेऊ । तब धरि धीर सुमित्राँ कहेऊ ॥ ७ ॥
देबि दंड जुग जामिनि बीती । राम मातु सुनि उठी सप्रीती ॥ ८ ॥

sabu ranivāsu bithaki lakhi rahē'ū. taba dhari dhīra sumitrām' kahē'ū. 7.
dēbi daṇḍa juga jāmini bītī. rāma mātu suni uṭhī saprītī. 8.

The entire royal household was speechless for some time. Then, Sumitra gathered her wits together to break the silence. (7)

Sumitra said to Kaushalya: 'Oh honourable madam (dēbi)! Nearly two hours of the night have already elapsed. [It is getting too late in the night. So we must take leave of each other for the time being.]'

Hearing her, Lord Ram's mother (Kaushalya) got up politely to end the meeting. (8)

दो०. बेगि पाउ धारिअ थलहि कह सनेहँ सतिभाय ।
हमरें तौ अब ईस गति कै मिथिलेस सहाय ॥ २८४ ॥
dōhā.

bēgi pā'u dhāri'a thalahi kaha sanēham' satibhāya.
hamarēm tau aba īsa gati kai mithilēsa sahāya. 284.

She (Kaushalya) told queen Sunayana very courteously: ‘Please return to your camp (as it is getting late in the night). Verily, we have God as our only refuge, and at the same time our only hope lies with king Janak.’¹ (Doha no. 284)

[Note—¹While taking leave of Sunayana, Kaushalya exhorted her to persuade her husband, king Janak, to assertively intervene and resolve the issue. Kaushalya expresses her helplessness as her own husband was dead, and going by her experience during the meeting held at Ayodhya, she doubted if sage Vasistha would have any influence on anybody, because she had witnessed that Bharat swept aside Vasistha’s advice and refused to accept the crown inspite of the sage trying his best to prevail upon Bharat to accept it. So this being the case, she was skeptical if Vasistha would be able to steer the course of events in a positive direction.

The gods she knew won’t help; after all, they hadn’t done anything positive till now. So in this backdrop, she says that the only hope she had was from king Janak.]

चौ०. लखि सनेह सुनि बचन बिनीता । जनकप्रिया गह पाय पुनीता ॥ १ ॥
देबि उचित असि बिनय तुम्हारी । दसरथ घरिनि राम महतारी ॥ २ ॥
प्रभु अपने नीचहु आदरहीं । अगिनि धूम गिरि सिर तिनु धरहीं ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

lakhi sanēha suni bacana binītā. janakapriyā gaha pāya punītā. 1.
dēbi ucita asi binaya tumhārī. dasaratha gharini rāma mahatārī. 2.
prabhu apanē nīcahu ādarahīm. agini dhūma giri sira tinu dharahīm. 3.

Observing how much Kaushalya had love and respect for everyone, and how courteous she was as was evident from the way she spoke politely, the beloved wife of king Janak (“janakapriyā”; Sunayana) bowed down to clasp her august feet (gaha pāya punītā)¹. (1)

Sunayana replied: ‘Oh honourable and noble lady (dēbi)! It is very appropriate for you to speak so kindly and politely to me, and to submit your request to me in a prayerful mode², for it is expected of you to be so nice and courteous as you are the wife of the illustrious king Dasrath and the mother of Lord Ram (both of whom are renowned for their gracious nature, politeness, good manners and excellent virtues). (2)

It indeed behooves of a great person of an exalted stature to be humble and polite with others in all matters (and it goes down well with their noble upbringing and high stature).

See for instance, the ‘fire’ (which is considered pure and holy, and is revered by everyone as it is used to make offerings during a religious ceremony) holds the ‘smoke’ over its head and allows it to hover overhead, and similarly the mighty ‘mountain’ does not feel shy in holding the humble ‘twig’ over its top and sides, and allowing it to flourish there (instead of crushing it underneath, and preventing the latter from riding on its top)³. (3)

[Note—¹In Hindu society, the parents of the groom are regarded with respect by the parents of the bride. Therefore, Kaushalya, being the mother of Lord Ram and the senior-most queen of the groom's family, she was deemed to be senior to Sunayana, the mother of Sita. Hence, it was appropriate for Sunayana to bow before and touch the feet of Kaushalya instead of the other way round.

As far as Kaushalya's feet being called "august", it is also apt for she was the mother of Lord Ram, the eldest of the four brothers and a revered prince.

²What did Kaushalya say to Sunayana in a polite way which the latter refers to here? The answer is found in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 283 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that follow it, and we have just a while ago read all about it.

³The 'fire' occupies a respected place, is brilliant by its inherent nature, gives life and warmth, and is considered as holy and purifying, while the 'smoke' is dark and chocking, and symbolic of things that are not pure and holy, characters just the opposite of fire. Yet, the fire has no regrets to let the smoke live on its top and rise up above its head to snake upwards in the sky as a sign of its misplaced sense of greatness and high stature. But this physical phenomena does not in any way reduce the high and noble stature of the 'fire' vis-à-vis the lowly standing of the 'smoke'. On the contrary, it shows how courteous and polite the fire is in letting the smoke hover on its head.

Similarly, the 'mountain' is so lofty and majestic in comparison to the lowly and humble 'twig' or a 'tree', but it never feels insulted if the twig or the tree grows on its top. On the contrary, it shows how noble and gracious the mountain is by allowing the inconsequential twig or the tree to boldly and proudly stand erect on the top of the mountain which humbly accepts this arrogance and haughtiness of the former.

The simple idea is that those who are really great and noble do not mind if those who are much lowly and junior to them feel a bit of happiness to show-off themselves. This gesture of showing courtesy and graciousness to others, no matter how lowly and humble the latter may be, only elevates a noble person to a higher pedestal than what he or she already occupies, and it elicits respect from others for that person.]

सेवकु राउ करम मन बानी । सदा सहाय महेसु भवानी ॥ ४ ॥

रउरे अंग जोगु जग को है । दीप सहाय कि दिनकर सोहै ॥ ५ ॥

sēvaku rā'u karama mana bānī. sadā sahāya mahēsu bhavānī. 4.

ra'urē aṅga jōgu jaga kō hai. dīpa sahāya ki dinakara sōhai. 5.

[Reciprocating Kaushalya's courtesy, Sunayana further said:] 'The king (Janak) is at your service at all times and with all his abilities; he will not shy in serving your interests with his actions, his intelligence and his words. Meanwhile, Lord Mahesh (Shiva) and goddess Bhavani (Shiva's divine consort, goddess Parvati), are always there to help us all. (4)

However, who is competent enough to be of any special help to you (for you are able in all respects). Say, can an ordinary earthen lamp aid the sun to light up the world?1 (5)

[Note—¹Sunayana means that the mother of Lord Ram and the queen of late king Dasrath, i.e. Kaushalya, occupies a high stature in society; she is wise, well respected by everyone, and her words are obeyed by all. This being the case, her seeking help from king Janak shows how courteous and humble she is, because she is competent enough to decide on any issue based on its merit by her own, instead of seeking any other person's help. It is like asking the humble oil lamp to help the sun to illuminate the world. That the lamp is requested to help the sun to light up the world is done only to show respect to the lamp; it is a noble gesture on behalf of the sun which actually does not need any help from any quarter to illuminate the world.]

रामु जाइ बनू करि सुर काजू । अचल अवधपुर करिहहिं राजू ॥ ६ ॥
अमर नाग नर राम बाहुबल । सुख बसिहहिं अपने अपने थल ॥ ७ ॥
यह सब जागबलिक कहि राखा । देबि न होइ मुधा मुनि भाषा ॥ ८ ॥

rāmu jā'i banu kari sura kājū. acala avadhapura karihahim rājū. 6.
amara nāga nara rāma bāhubala. sukha basihahim apanēm apanēm thala. 7.
yaha saba jāgaballika kahi rākhā. dēbi na hō'i mudhā muni bhāṣā. 8.

Lord Ram would go to the forest to fulfill his obligations towards the gods (which is to eliminate the scourge of the cruel demons), and then he would return to Ayodhya to be crowned as the king and rule over it. (6)

With this success (elimination of the tyrannical rule of the demons), the Lord would restore order in the world so that the gods (in the heaven), the serpents (representing the creatures of the subterranean world), and the humans (and all other living beings living on the surface of the earth) would be able to live peacefully and happily in their respective abodes by the courtesy of the strength of Lord Ram's arms. (7)

Oh honourable madam (dēbi)! All this has already been pronounced by sage Yagyawalkya, and the sage's words cannot go in vain.¹ (8)

[Note—¹Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 30; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 44—to Doha no. 47.

Yagyawalkya was a great sage of his time. Even king Janak had accepted the sage's exalted stature as the most wise and enlightened sage of his time, and acknowledged him as one of his gurus, for Janak had engaged Yagyawalkya in a personal one-on-one question-answer session regarding esoteric questions pertaining to metaphysics and spiritualism, and was so impressed by the sage's knowledge and wisdom that he accepted to be initiated by the latter and accept him as his moral guide and preceptor. There is an Upanishad called the 'Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad' belonging to the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition where a detailed narration is available which elaborately describes these incidents. {Refer: Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad,

Cantos 3 and 4. This humble author has written an elaborate commentary on this Upanishad in English as part of his voluminous work on all the 108 Upanishads in English. It is available on-line at the same site from where the esteemed reader had accessed this Book 'Ram Charit Manas'.}

This being the case, it is expected that Sunayana would be aware of the story of Lord Ram as narrated by this great sage, for it is certain that her husband, king Janak, too must have heard it either directly from Yagyawalkya, or indirectly from someone else who must have himself heard it being narrated by the sage.]

दो०. अस कहि पग परि पेम अति सिय हित बिनय सुनाइ ।
सिय समेत सियमातु तब चली सुआयसु पाइ ॥ २८५ ॥

dōhā.

asa kahi paga pari pēma ati siya hita binaya sunā'i.
siya samēta siyamātu taba calī su'āyasu pā'i. 285.

Saying this, Sunayana bowed at the feet of Kaushalya, and requested her to give permission to Sita so that she can accompany her mother (Sunayana) to her own camp.

After this, having obtained permission from Kaushalya, Sita's mother left her to go back to her own camp accompanied by Sita. (Doha no. 285)

चौ०. प्रिय परिजनहि मिली बैदेही । जो जेहि जोगु भाँति तेहि तेही ॥ १ ॥
तापस बेष जानकी देखी । भा सबु बिकल बिषाद बिसेषी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

priya parijanahi milī baidēhī. jō jēhi jōgu bhām̐ti tēhi tēhī. 1.
tāpasa bēṣa jānakī dēkhī. bhā sabu bikala biṣāda bisēṣī. 2.

Sita ("baidēhī"; the daughter of king Janak who was also known as 'Videha') met and greeted the dear ones from her parent's family (who had accompanied king Janak and queen Sunayana to Chitrakoot) in accordance with their status in the family hierarchy as well as her personal equation with them¹. (1)

When they saw Sita dressed as a hermitress, they were shocked and agitated beyond measure as an overwhelming sense of sorrow filled their hearts². (2)

[Note—¹Some, such as her close family members, the attendants of the palace where she was born and grew up, her maids and close associates, and her friends etc., were very close to Sita while she grew up and lived in Janakpur. All had come to meet her. Then there were other members of the camp, such as the wives of the citizens of Janakpur and wives of Brahmins, who too loved Sita but were not as close to her at a personal level were some of her friends who had played with her during her childhood days, as well as the attendants of the royal household who had seen her born, grow up and get married. To wit, every individual had a different set of equation with Sita, and she met all of them in accordance with it.

²This was the first time the female members of king Janak's camp had seen Sita. The last time they had seen her was in her bridal finery in Janakpur, wonderfully dressed and wearing glittering ornaments behooving a princess of a great kingdom who was just married to a fine prince of another great kingdom, and was about to leave her parental home for her husband's home in Ayodhya.

Thus, the sight of Sita dressed like someone living a life as a hermit in the forest shocked her kinsfolk beyond measure. It was a very sorrowful and painful experience for all her friends and relations.

Earlier we have read that a similar shock was felt by the male members of king Janak's party when they saw Lord Ram in the habit of a hermit; all were overcome with grief and distress—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 276.]

जनक राम गुर आयसु पाई । चले थलहि सिय देखी आई ॥ ३ ॥
लीन्हि लाइ उर जनक जानकी । पाहुनि पावन पेम प्रान की ॥ ४ ॥

janaka rāma gura āyasu pā'ī. calē thalahi siya dēkhī ā'ī. 3.
līnhi lā'i ura janaka jānakī. pāhuni pāvana pēma prāna kī. 4.

Meanwhile, king Janak (who was sitting with other senior members of both the camps) took permission from sage Vasistha (the guru of Lord Ram; “rāma gura”) and went to his own camp so that he can meet his daughter Sita. (3)

Janak lovingly embraced his beloved daughter Janaki (i.e. Sita) with the greatest of affection and respect he could muster for her, for he loved her as dearly as his own life¹. (4)

[Note—¹A heart-touching scene is described in Ram Charit Manas of the moment when Lord Ram's marriage party was about to depart from Janakpur for Ayodhya. No sooner king Janak had learnt of the departure of the marriage party from Janakpur, but he was overwhelmed with sorrows and the prospect of separation from his dear daughter whom he loved as dearly as his own life. The final moments of parting are heart-wrenching and would bring out tears from the most hardened of souls. This episode is narrated in great detail in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 333—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 339. {To be more specific vis-à-vis king Janak's overwhelming sense of grief when he learnt that the groom's party was making preparation to depart, refer to: Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 339—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 339.}]

उर उमगेउ अंबुधि अनुरागू । भयउ भूप मनु मनहुँ पयागू ॥ ५ ॥
सिय सनेह बटु बाढ़त जोहा । ता पर राम पेम सिसु सोहा ॥ ६ ॥

ura umagē'u ambudhi anurāgū. bhaya'u bhūpa manu manahum¹ payāgū. 5.
siya sanēha baṭu bārḥata jōhā. tā para rāma pēma sisu sōhā. 6.

An ocean symbolizing his emotions and love for his daughter swelled high in his heart, and it appeared that his Mana (heart and mind) had been transformed into a personified form of Prayag¹. (5)

Janak's love and respect for Sita grew by the moment in an imperceptible way just like the huge banyan tree present on the banks of Triveni that grows gradually over time².

And on this symbolic tree, there was present a magnificent young fruit in the form of love for Lord Ram that Sita had for her Lord, a fruit that gave glory and magnificence to the tree (tā para rāma pēma sisu sōhā), and which Janak too very much appreciated³. (6)

[Note—¹“Prayag” is that sacred place where three holy rivers, viz. the Ganges, the Yamuna and the Saraswati, meet at a spot known as ‘Triveni’, i.e. the meeting place of three rivers.

It is obvious that when three rivers meet each other there would be a great turbulence in the water; it would heave and splash in every direction. Besides this physical factor, there is another interesting point to note about Triveni—and it is that though it is believed to be the meeting point of ‘three rivers’, yet only ‘two’ are visible on the surface, viz. Ganges and Yamuna, while the ‘third’, Saraswati, is believed to be under the surface, probably as a subterranean river.

In the present analogy, Sita and Janak represent the two visible rivers, while the joy of meeting each other and the mutual love between a father and his daughter were hidden from view like the invisible third river.

This place known as Prayag is called the ‘king amongst all the holy places’; it is regarded as very holy, sacrosanct and pure. Hence, by using the metaphor of Prayag in relation to the meeting of Janak and Sita, it is impressed that this meeting had all the ingredients of auspiciousness and the purity of love and affection that exist between a loving father and his devoted daughter who has proved her stellar character and virtues by living up to her father's expectations by upholding the laws of Dharma and the duties of a loyal and faithful wife.

Hence, the purity of affection that Janak had for Sita acquires a special quality, a special significance, and is therefore compared to “Prayag”. Indeed, Janak was mightily proud of his daughter for upholding the laws of Dharma and being diligent towards her responsibilities by accompanying her husband, Lord Ram, to the forest to share his fate and sufferings like a loyal and faithful wife is expected to do in spite of everyone trying to convince her not to do so*1. By her actions, Sita had brought glory to both the families, of her father Janak as well as her father-in-law king Dasrath. In fact, Janak and his family were all praise for Sita and lauded her virtues in lavish terms*2.

[Refer: *1 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 57—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 68 (mother Kaushalya and Lord Ram); (ii) Doha no. 78 along with Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede it (king Dasrath).

*2 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 287 herein below.}

²There is a huge ‘Banyan Tree’ known as “Akshaya Vat” on the banks of Triveni. It is believed to be as old as Triveni itself. It has deep roots and is believed to be an eternal tree.

Here, this analogy implies that the affection Janak had for Sita was eternal and firmly rooted, and it grew more robust when Janak came to know of his daughter’s decision to join Lord Ram when he was going to the forest. Sita’s actions had made Janak proud of her, and his love and affection for her, as well as esteem and high thinking of her, grew manifold times. It became as deep and robust as the ‘Akshaya Vat’ on the banks of Triveni.

³The most important component of all this was the “virtue of love for Lord Ram” that everyone had, a virtue that united everyone by a common thread, and was equally appreciated by all. It was this love for the Lord that compelled Sita to abandon the comforts of her home and accompany the Lord to the forest*1; it was this love for the Lord that had swept king Janak off his feet when he had first met the Lord*2, and later on even at the time of departure of the groom’s party from Janakpur for Ayodhya, Janak was overwhelmed with it so much so that he could not conceal his affection for the Lord*3.

{Refer: *1 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 64—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 68.

*2 = Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 215—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 216; (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 217.

*3 = Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 341—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 342.}]

चिरजीवी मुनि ग्यान बिकल जनु । बूड़त लहेउ बाल अवलंबनु ॥ ७ ॥
मोह मगन मति नहिं बिदेह की । महिमा सिय रघुबर सनेह की ॥ ८ ॥

cirajīvī muni gyāna bikala janu. būrata lahē'u bāla avalambanu. 7.
mōha magana mati nahim bidēha kī. mahimā siya raghubara sanēha kī. 8.

Those sages who had eternal lives and were embodiments of Gyan (gnosis; those who were highly wise, self-realised and enlightened) too became upset when they came to learn about how Janak was moved when he met Sita. But however, they regained their composure when they realized that Janak was moved because his daughter had immense love for Lord Ram, whom Janak treated as his own son¹. (7)

Verily indeed and without gainsay, king Videha was not under any kind of delusions nor was he trapped in a web of attachment and worldly relations that had made him so emotionally moved when he met Sita, but actually it was his love for Lord Ram (whom he knew to be a manifestation of the Supreme Being)² that had made him so emotional at the time. (8)

[Note—¹To wit, the great sages felt happy that the reason why Janak lost his famed composure was that he was overwhelmed with respect for his daughter Sita as she had great love for Lord Ram. Janak too loved Lord Ram intensely, and he treated the Lord as his own son. So therefore, the sages drew comfort from the fact that everyone had

great love and respect for Lord Ram, and it was the common thread of love for the Lord that bound everyone in an eternal bond of kinship.

²Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 215—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 216; (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 217; (iii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 341—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 342.

It is to be remarked especially that king Janak has been called “Videha” here. The word means one who is detached from his physical body at the spiritual level; one who is detached from the gross body and remains aloof from how it interacts with and influenced by the external world of sense objects. This being the case, it apparently seems contradictory that while Janak is expected to be detached from worldly relationships and hence deal with Sita in a neutral way, though she might be his daughter, and stand true to his title of being called ‘Videha’, yet he was greatly moved and emotionally upset at the time he met her because huge waves of love and affection buffeted his inner being.

The answer is that it was because Sita reminded king Janak of Lord Ram, and her devotion for the Lord reminded the king of his own devotion for the Lord—whom he knew to be a personified form of the Supreme Lord and the Father of the world. This love was therefore not of a worldly kind; it was a transcendental and a pure form love that exists between the soul of an individual living being and the Supreme Soul of this creation that is the parent of the individual’s soul. It’s like the love that naturally exists between an infant child and his doting father. This is why the phrase “*lahē’u bāla avalambanu*” have been used in the main text of these verses, for a father finds no other pleasure that is greater than being able to shower his love on his child, and in times of distress the father finds solace in his child, and clasping the latter to his bosom gives him great comfort.]

दो०. सिय पितु मातु सनेह बस बिकल न सकी सँभारि ।
 धरनिसुताँ धीरजु धरेउ समउ सुधरमु बिचारि ॥ २८६ ॥
 dōhā.

siya pitu mātu sanēha basa bikala na sakī sam̐bhāri.
 dharanisutām̐ dhīraju dharē’u sama’u sudharamu bicāri. 286.

The mother and father of Sita had become very emotional and were so overwhelmed with affection for her that they found it difficult to control themselves.

They however comforted Sita and told her: ‘Oh daughter of mother Earth (dharanisutām̐)¹! Have courage in this time of adversity, and be happy that you are following the auspicious and the right path of Dharma.²’ (Doha no. 286)

[Note—¹Sita is called the “daughter of mother Earth” because she was discovered in a pitcher while king Janak was cleaning the ground to perform a fire sacrifice. This is clearly narrated in Veda Vyas’ “Adhyatma Ramayan”, Baal Kand, Canto 6, verse nos. 59-60.

The use of the word “dharanisutām̐” is very significant here, for it clearly implies that both Janak and Sunayana had known that Sita was not their biological daughter. Hence, their affection for her revolved around the fact that Sita loved Lord

Ram very dearly and had sacrificed her life for the sake of the Lord, and not because she was their daughter.

²Janak and Sunayana appreciated the fact that Sita had honoured the great tradition of in the society that a wife should be loyal and faithful to her husband, that she must share the joys and sorrows of her husband, that she must dedicate her life to him, and that she must sacrifice her own comforts in favour of her husband's comfort. This is exactly what Sita had told Lord Ram while she was convincing him to take her along with him to the forest. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 64—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 67.}

These qualities in Sita were appreciated by her parents when they comforted her and told her that she had done the right thing by following the path of Dharma.]

चौ०. तापस बेष जनक सिय देखी । भयउ पेमु परितोषु बिसेषी ॥ १ ॥

पुत्रि पबित्र किए कुल दोऊ । सुजस धवल जगु कह सबु कोऊ ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

tāpasa bēṣa janaka siya dēkhī. bhaya'u pēmu paritōṣu bisēṣī. 1.
putri pabitra ki'ē kula dō'ū. sujasa dhavala jagu kaha sabu kō'ū. 2.

When Janak saw Sita attired in the habit of a hermitress, he felt very contented, and affection for her blossomed in his heart¹. (1)

Janak said to Sita: 'Oh daughter (putri)! Thou hast brought laurels to both our two families (i.e. thine parent's family, as well as the family of thine parents-in-law); thou hast indeed sanctified both the families.

In all sooth, thine conduct has been lauded the world over, and everyone who became aware of thy response to adversities and misfortunes have unanimously declared that thine stellar virtues and glories hast illuminated the world (like the brilliant and taintless light of the sun). [Oh my dear daughter, thou hast shone a light to others and set a benchmark for all future generations to emulate.]² (2)

[Note—¹The difference between the response of king Janak when he saw Sita dressed as a hermitress and other members of his family is very stark. We have read a little while ago*1 that when Sunayana took Sita with her to meet other members of her family, such as her kith and kin, her childhood friends, her close companions, her attendants who had served her since her infant days, and associates who were very close to her during her days at her parent's home prior to her marriage, they were all shocked and utterly distressed when they saw Sita in the attire of a forest-dwelling hermit.

But now we read that Janak has expressed his satisfaction, and goes on to add that Sita has brought laurels to the family by her conduct. Janak shows no sign of regret or sorrow at seeing his daughter in a hermitress' habit. This behooves well for him as he lived up to his famed title of being 'Videha'*2, which implies he had the reputation of being an enlightened king who remains detached from all worldly affairs, who remains dispassionate and uninvolved in matters related to the gross body, and therefore he knows that actually there is no real relationship between any two individuals in this world, as the 'true self' of a person is not his or her gross

physical body but it is the Atma that is the ‘true self’, and the Atma has no relationships.

Though this is true that Janak remained dispassionate most of the time, yet we have seen that sometimes he is affected and seems to be emotionally involved, as was the case when he met Sita when a surge of affection overwhelmed his heart and he embraced her like any worldly father would do when he meets his dear daughter after a long time, and especially under difficult conditions*3. But then, it has been immediately clarified that this emotional reaction of Janak had a sublime aspect to it: he had been overwhelmed with love for Sita not because she was his worldly daughter but because she had proved by her conduct that she is a true and ardent devotee of Lord Ram, the manifested form of the Supreme Being, and as a true devotee for whom no other relationship matter but his dear Lord, and who would sacrifice everything in order to serve his or her Lord, Sita too had sacrificed everything so that she can serve Lord Ram in the forest. Janak has acknowledged that Sita was not his daughter in the conventional meaning of the word, for she was the ‘daughter of mother Earth’*4; he had only adopted her. This being the case, even from a practical point of view, there is no reason why Janak should be too much emotionally attached with her.

Hence, the only bond that existed between Janak and Sita was the common respect, dedication, devotion, love and affection that they had for Lord Ram. So, the meeting between Janak and Sita was more like a meeting between two loving devotees of Lord God rather than between a father and his daughter.

{Refer: *1 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 286.

*2 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 286.

*3 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 286.

*4 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 286.}

²Janak’s comments assume significance in the light of what he had advised her at the time of her departure with Lord Ram for her in-law’s home—that she ought to live a righteous life, honour the virtues and traditions for which her family is renowned, as well as follow all the principles and rules of conduct that are mandated for a married woman by the scriptures and traditions. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 339.}

Even Sita’s close friends and her mother, queen Sunayana, had advised her regarding the many rules that a married lady ought to remember and follow in her life. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-71 that precede Doha no. 334.}

Obviously, this advice includes how a wife should invariably share the sorrows and joys of her husband throughout her life. For a wife, the best thing for her is to serve her husband under all circumstances. This fact is endorsed in another context when we read that Parvati’s parents had advised her exactly this thing after her marriage with Lord Shiva, at the time when she was leaving her parents to go with her husband to his abode in Mt. Kailash. {Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 102.}

Hence, Sita’s decision to join her husband, Lord Ram, in his journey to the forest was a most welcome decision on her part, and her worldly father, king Janak, expresses his immense satisfaction with her conduct on this account.]

जिति सुरसरि कीरति सरि तोरी । गवनु कीन्ह बिधि अंड करोरी ॥ ३ ॥
गंग अवनि थल तीनि बड़ेरे । एहिं किए साधु समाज घनेरे ॥ ४ ॥

jiti surasari kīrati sari tōrī. gavanu kīnha bidhi aṇḍa karōrī. 3.
gaṅga avani thala tīni baṛērē. ēhiṁ ki'ē sādhu samāja ghanērē. 4.

The river of thine glories hast much surpassed the glories of the holy river Ganges itself, and it has spread thine fame and unequivocally established it in all the corners of the world created by the Creator—i.e. in the entire universe consisting of numerous worlds (bidhi aṇḍa karōrī)¹. (3)

River Ganges has given glory to only three places on earth (though it flows through an extensive area of land mass)², but your goodness and virtues have found a respectful place in the hearts of countless pious souls and sages (who love Lord Ram and are devoted to him)³. (4)

[Note—¹This is merely a figure of speech to say a simple thing that Sita's excellent conduct has been lauded by everyone in the world, and she has become famous by the virtue of her deeds and character.

²River Ganges originates in the higher reaches of the Himalayan mountain range, at a place called 'Gangotari'. It is a glacier that feeds this river. After cascading down the mountains, the river descends on the plains and traverses its path eastwards to finally enter the eastern ocean, known as the 'Bay of Bengal', at a place known as 'Ganga-Sagar' in the east coast of India.

There are three places during the long course of the river through the plains that are regarded as holy and have been assigned the honour of being great pilgrim centers. These are (i) Haridwar, at the foothills of the Himalayas, (ii) Prayag, also known as Triveni, in central India, and (iii) Ganga-Sagar, the place where Ganges meets the eastern ocean.

³But Sita has found an honourable place in the heart of every saint and pious soul who love Lord Ram and is devoted to him, as she is not only his consort who is very dear to the Lord, who had dedicated herself and her life in the service of the Lord, but she was also a personified form of goddess Laxmi, the Mother Goddess and the divine consort of Lord Vishnu who had manifested himself as Lord Ram. From a metaphysical point of view as enunciated in the Upanishads, such as the Ram Tapini Upanishad, Ram Rahasya Uanishad, and Sita Upanishad, Sita represents Maya while Lord Ram represents the Supreme Being known as Brahm. In this context, refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chanda line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 51; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 246; (b) Ayodhya Kand, (iii) Chanda line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 126; (c) Uttar Kand, (iv) Chanda line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 14; (v) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 48; (vi) Doha no. 85-a.]

पितु कह सत्य सनेहँ सुबानी । सीय सकुच महुँ मनहुँ समानी ॥ ५ ॥

पुनि पितु मातु लीन्हि उर लाई । सिख आसिष हित दीन्हि सुहाई ॥ ६ ॥

pitu kaha satya sanēham' subānī. siya sakuca mahum' manahum' samānī. 5.
puni pitu mātu līnhi ura lā'ī. sikha āsiṣa hita dīnhi suhā'ī. 6.

Her father (king Janak) had spoken the truth in praise of Sita, but it made her feel very so shy and abashed out of embarrassment for being praised so highly in public that she seemed to drown in an ocean of discomfiture. [This shows how modest she was.] (5)

Meanwhile, her mother (Sunayana) repeatedly embraced her and clasped her to her own bosom even as she blessed Sita and gave her many good advices that would stand her in good stead in life¹. (6)

[Note—¹Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-7 that precede Doha no. 334 where we read a similar narration at the time of Sita's departure from Jankpur to go with her husband, Lord Ram, to her new home in Ayodhya.]

कहति न सीय सकुचि मन माहीं । इहाँ बसब रजनीं भल नाहीं ॥ ७ ॥
लखि रुख रानि जनायउ राऊ । हृदयँ सराहत सीलु सुभाऊ ॥ ८ ॥

kahati na siya sakuci mana māhīm. ihām' basaba rajanīm bhala nāhīm. 7.
lakhi rukha rāni janāya'u rā'ū. hrdayam' sarāhata sīlu subhā'ū. 8.

Sita was hesitant to express her view that it would not be proper for her to stay there (in her father's camp) during the night. [To wit, Sita wished to return to her hermitage and stay with Lord Ram as was her daily routine. She did not think it fit to spend the night away from Lord Ram, in her parent's camp.] (7)

The queen (Sunayana) realized what was in the mind of Sita (for surely Sita must have hinted it to her mother that it was getting late in the night, and that she wanted to return back to the hermitage, as it would not be proper for her to stay at her parent's camp for the night, away from her husband), and she confided about it with the king (Janak).

Both of them, i.e. Janak and his wife Sunayana, were greatly impressed by the good nature and virtues of Sita. (8)

दो०. बार बार मिलि भेंटि सिय बिदा कीन्हि सनमानि ।
कही समय सिर भरत गति रानि सुबानि सयानि ॥ २८७ ॥

dōhā.

bāra bāra mili bhēṇṭi siya bidā kīnhi sanamāni.
kahī samaya sira bharata gati rāni subāni sayāni. 287.

Both the parents repeatedly embraced Sita most affectionately, and respectfully gave her their permission to leave.

After Sita left, the king and the queen sat down to talk with each other. At this opportunity, the good queen told her husband politely about Bharat and his doleful condition¹. (Doha no. 287)

[Note—¹We have read earlier that when Kaushalya had met Sunayana, the misfortunes that had befallen upon the family were discussed in detail, and during it the subject of Bharat and his sorrowful condition was talked about at length between them*1. Kaushalya had requested Sunayana at that time to seek an appointment with king Janak, and at the opportune moment raise the subject of Bharat and what probable course of action can be taken with regards to finding an acceptable solution to the vexed issue present before everyone. Sunayana had agreed to do so. Kaushalya had also expressed her opinion that it would not be proper for Lord Ram to return home before the fourteen years had ended as it would violate the words of king Dasrath. Since he is dead now, it becomes all the more imperative to keep his words. So she had suggested that Bharat should accompany Lord Ram in the forest, and Laxman should return home*2. Sunayana had assured Kaushalya that she would take up the matter with her husband, king Janak, and do her best as suggested by the Kaushalya*3.

{Refer to: *1 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 281—to Doha no. 283.

*2 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 284.

*3 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 284—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 285.}

This was the best time for Sunayana to discuss the matter with her husband, for they were alone in the night and had ample time to talk in private. It was the last opportunity that Sunayana had, for the very next day a grand conference would be held, and the issue at hand—i.e. who will proceed to the forest and who will return home—would be discussed and finalized then. If she lost this opportunity, it may be too late for her. So, after Sita left her parents' camp to go back to her hermitage, Sunayana asked her husband to spare some time for her so that she can talk with him in private regarding Bharat and what probable line of action that would be acceptable to all could be taken. During the course of this conversation, Sunayana eloquently told king Janak about Bharat's condition as briefed by Kaushalya.]

चौ०. सुनि भूपाल भरत व्यवहारू । सोन सुगंध सुधा ससि सारू ॥ १ ॥

मूदे सजल नयन पुलके तन । सुजसु सराहन लगे मुदित मन ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sunī bhūpāla bharata byavahārū. sōna sugandha sudhā sasi sārū. 1.

mūdē sajala nayana pulakē tana. sujasu sarāhana lagē mudita mana. 2.

When the king heard the conduct of Bharat (especially certain aspects of it that was not public but limited to his interaction with Kaushalya and others who were close to him)¹, he concluded that Bharat and his character were a rare amalgam of fragrance and gold², or represented the essence of the ambrosia meant for the gods that is said to be stored for their in the moon³, which is the believed to be the heavenly receptacle for it. (1)

The king was so overwhelmed with reverence and affection for Bharat that he closed his eyes that had become wet with tears even as his body felt a thrill passing through it.

Janak began to lavishly praise Bharat's glories and virtues with an exhilarated heart and mind (*mudita mana*). (2)

[Note—¹King Janak had already heard about Bharat and his conduct through his spies—apropos: *Ram Charit Manas*, *Ayodhya Kand*, Doha no. 271 along with *Chaupai* line no. 1 that follow it.

Now, these spies learnt only those things that were public knowledge—such as the meeting that was held to persuade Bharat to accept the crown and his refusal to do so, and his decision to proceed to the forest to meet Lord Ram and ask for forgiveness as well as persuade the Lord to return. But these spies had no way to know what happened within the walls of the palace, of what transpired when Bharat met his mother Kaikeyi and Kaushalya; they also did not know what opinion members of his family had for him. It's very natural that a mother would know many things about her son that others aren't aware of. Hence, when Sunayana told king Janak what Kaushalya had told her, the king felt mightily pleased, and his opinion of Bharat was raised to a higher level.

²Gold is a metal that has no fragrance of its own. But suppose if some subtle fragrance is added to it by some means, and an ornament is crafted from this scented gold, it would be nothing short of a miracle and a unique masterpiece of jewelry that would be priceless. It would spread its fragrance naturally and anyone who wears it would be drawing attention from all those around.

Similarly, the stellar character of Bharat, his righteousness and good conduct, his sense of probity and propriety were so exemplary that king Janak praised him as being a rare jewel of an exceptional quality.

³The moon is the receptacle for the ambrosia that the gods use. Hence, Bharat's conduct and his character are rejuvenating and invigorating for the soul in as much as by his conduct Bharat has shown what 'devotion' (*Bhakti*) for Lord Ram, the Supreme Being, actually means, and how it can be actually practiced. This will be more marked later on in the story when we read more about Bharat and how he lived a life doing severe penance and observing austerity after returning to Ayodhya, which was highly praised and glorified by all the great saints and sages of the time. {Apropos: *Ram Charit Manas*, *Ayodhya Kand*, *Chaupai* line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 324—to *Sortha* (Doha) no. 326.}]

सावधान सुनु सुमुखि सुलोचनि । भरत कथा भव बंध बिमोचनि ॥ ३ ॥

धरम राजनय ब्रह्मबिचारू । इहाँ जथामति मोर प्रचारू ॥ ४ ॥

सो मति मोरि भरत महिमाही । कहै काह छलि छुअति न छाँही ॥ ५ ॥

sāvadhāna sunu sumukhi sulōcani. bharata kathā bhava bandha bimōcani. 3.
dharama rājanaya brahmabīcārū. ihām̐ jathāmati mōra pracārū. 4.

sō mati mōri bharata mahimāhī. kahai kāha chali chu'ati na chām'hī. 5.

Recovering his composure, the king told Sunayana: 'Oh gentle lady with pretty face and eyes (sumukhi, sulōcani), please pay attention to what I have to say. The story of Bharat (that narrates his conduct, virtues and character, as well as his devotion for and dedication to Lord Ram), is so holy and purifying that it enables a person to find liberation and deliverance from the snare of this gross mundane existence.

[This is because it teaches the person who listens it carefully how to have devotion for Lord Ram, how to dedicate one's life and all its deeds to Lord Ram, how one should be loyal to the Lord and brush aside all criticism and adversities that stand in the way of his submission before the Lord. Bharat's story teaches one 'Bhakti', the stellar spiritual virtue of having devotion and love for the Lord God.] (3)

It is true that I have some reasonable understanding and knowledge of subjects pertaining to the principles of Dharma (that relate to the virtues of righteousness, probity, propriety, ethics and noble conduct in one's life), to the principles of polity and statecraft, as well as the metaphysical philosophy as enunciated in the scriptures that deal with Brahm (the Supreme Self represented by the cosmic Consciousness).

[I can discuss on any of these topics at length with confidence, and I can safely say that I have some depth of knowledge vis-à-vis these subjects.] (4)

But to speak the truth, this intellect of mine (that has access to the aforesaid esoteric subjects) fails when it comes to understanding the glories and virtues of Bharat in their entirety. So, how can I be competent to say anything or express my opinion of the exemplary character and stellar virtues of Bharat.

Indeed, in all sooth and without gainsay, I must concede that my so-called wisdom and intellectual prowess are unable to come even within reach of the shadow of Bharat's glories and virtues no matter what stratagem they adopt, so therefore it is impossible for me to do justice to Bharat by attempting to actually describe his virtues, glories and character sufficiently.¹ (5)

[Note—¹King Janak was famed for his wisdom, intelligence and knowledge of virtually all topics under the sun. Yet he acknowledges here that he fails to fathom Bharat's true glories and the immensity of his virtues vis-à-vis his devotion for Lord Ram and his dedication to the Lord. This is a great tribute to Bharat for it comes from king Janak who was one of the most illustrious, wise, knowledgeable and enlightened person of that age.]

बिधि गनपति अहिपति सिव सारद । कबि कोबिद बुध बुद्धि बिसारद ॥ ६ ॥

भरत चरित कीरति करतूती । धरम सील गुन बिमल बिभूती ॥ ७ ॥

समुझत सुनत सुखद सब काहू । सुचि सुरसरि रुचि निदर सुधाहू ॥ ८ ॥

bidhi ganapati ahipati siva sārada. kabi kōbida budha bud'dhi bisārada. 6.

bharata carita kīrati karatūti. dharama sīla guna bimala bibhūti. 7.

samujhata sunata sukhada saba kāhū. suci surasari ruci nidara sudhāhū. 8.

[In the following three verses, king Janak lists great souls all of whom find immense joy and derive a lesson for themselves when they hear Bharat's glorious virtues and the purity of his devotion for Lord Ram.]

The Creator (Brahma), Lord Ganesh (the chief of the attendants of Lord Shiva), the Lord of the subterranean world (i.e. Lord Sheshnath, the legendary Serpent), Lord Shiva, goddess Sharda (Saraswati, the goddess of learning, wisdom and speech), wise poets and expert bards, those who are learned and intelligent, those who pride themselves for their knowledge and wisdom, et al --- (6)

--- Bharat's glories, virtues and character, his conduct and goodness, his allegiance to the principles of Dharma, his courteousness and good manners, and all other qualities that he possesses are so exemplary and auspicious that --- (7)

--- They provide immense joy and happiness to all those (such as the ones listed herein above, for instance) who understand them and hear about them (*samujhata sunata sukhada saba kāhū*).

Indeed and in all sooth, Bharat's glories and virtues as well as his exemplary conduct are as purifying as the waters of the holy river Ganges, the river of the gods. In fact, they are so sweet, refreshing and rejuvenating for the soul that they put to shame even the ability of pure nectar to grant these blessings to the creature.¹ (8)

[Note—¹In this context, refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 326 along with Chaupai line nos. 3-8 and Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede it.]

दो०. निरवधि गुन निरुपम पुरुषु भरतु भरत सम जानि ।
कहिअ सुमेरु कि सेर सम कबिकुल मति सकुचानि ॥ २८८ ॥
dōhā.

niravadhi guna nirupama puruṣu bharatu bharata sama jāni.
kahi'a sumēru ki sēra sama kabikula mati sakucāni. 288.

Janak continued to extol Bharat's glories: 'There is no measurement of his qualities. There is no person with whom Bharat can be compared. In fact, one must regard Bharat as unique, and one like his own self.

Say, can the weight of the mighty mountain known as 'Sumeru' (where the gods live) be ever compared to the meagre weight known as a 'Sera' (*sēra*)¹?

Verily, this is why the intellect and wit of the wisest of persons fail to narrate the glories of Bharat (because it is beyond their reach).' (Doha no. 288)

[Note—¹The 'sera' is an Indian measurement of weight that is equivalent to 2 pounds. How can the mighty mountain known as the 'Sumeru' be ever weighed in terms of the 'sera'? It is just like the case of trying to measure the distance between two farthest galaxies using the meagre scale of centimeters and inches; it's sheer madness even to think of doing so. Likewise, it is not possible for anyone to comprehensively describe the glories, virtues and qualities of Bharat. Even the learned ones who can comfortably explain the Upanishads and expound on their metaphysical philosophy would throw their hands up to surrender if asked to describe the glories, the virtues

and the qualities of Bharat, especially that pertains to his personal equation of Bhakti that he has for Lord Ram, i.e. his devotion for and dedication to Lord Ram.]

चौ०. अगम सबहि बरनत बरबरनी । जिमि जलहीन मीन गमु धरनी ॥ १ ॥

भरत अमित महिमा सुनु रानी । जानहिं रामु न सकहिं बखानी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

agama sabahi baranata barabaranī. jimi jalahīna mīna gamu dharanī. 1.
bharata amita mahimā sunu rānī. jānahim rāmu na sakahim bakhānī. 2.

Further glorifying Bharat, king Janak said: ‘It is impossible for anyone to describe the glories and virtues of Bharat in entirety just like the case of it being impossible for a fish to walk on dry land. (1)

Listen oh Queen (sunu rānī)! Bharat’s greatness is so immense that even Lord Ram cannot narrate it fully, though of course the Lord is aware of it.’ (2)

बरनि सप्रेम भरत अनुभाऊ । तिय जिय की रुचि लखि कह राऊ ॥ ३ ॥

बहुरहिं लखनु भरतु बन जाहीं । सब कर भल सब के मन माहीं ॥ ४ ॥

barani saprēma bharata anubhā'ū. tiya jiya kī ruci lakhi kaha rā'ū. 3.
bahurahim lakhanu bharatu bana jāhīm. saba kara bhala saba kē mana māhīm. 4.

Even as he lavishly praised Bharat and extolled his glories, king Janak had also sensed what his wife wished in her heart and wanted to share her views with him. So the king said--- (3)

‘If Laxman returns home and Bharat proceeds to the forest in his stead, it would a welcome move and liked by everyone, for this is what everybody wants¹. (4)

[Note—¹How did Janak know that this option was a viable alternative that would be liked by everyone, and Bharat would gladly accept it?

Well, there are two possibilities: One is that Sunayana had herself briefed king Janak of this possibility while she was telling him about what she learned of him during her conversation with Kaushalya—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 287.

The other is that sage Vasistha had told the king about this offer which was made by the sage himself and accepted by Bharat during their meeting earlier*1, and later on openly made by Bharat personally during his meeting with Lord Ram in the first conference held between them*2. We must note that before coming to meet Sita, king Janak was sitting and conversing with sages, and it is especially mentioned that he took permission from sage Vasistha to leave so that he could go to his camp to meet Sita*3. Hence, sage Vasistha had ample time to tell the king about the most viable option that might be acceptable to all.

{Refer: *1 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3 and 8 that precede Doha no. 256.

*2 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 268 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that follow it.

*3 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 286.}]

देबि परंतु भरत रघुबर की । प्रीति प्रतीति जाइ नहिं तरकी ॥ ५ ॥

भरतु अवधि सनेह ममता की । जद्यपि रामु सीम समता की ॥ ६ ॥

dēbi parantu bharata raghubara kī. prīti pratīti jā'i nahim tarakī. 5.
bharatu avadhi sanēha mamatā kī. jadyapi rāmu sīma samatā kī. 6.

But my honourable lady (dēbi), it is not possible to fully understand and judge the extent of mutual love and affection that exist between Bharat and Lord Ram, the exalted Lord of the illustrious family of king Raghu (raghubara); it is beyond conception and imagination. (5)

For while Bharat is to be regarded as an epitome of the divine virtues of love and affection (for Lord Ram), the Lord himself is a perfect example of one who treats everyone alike, without distinction between any two individuals.

[Therefore, I don't see why Lord Ram will side with Bharat and concede to his request to let him accompany the Lord to the forest at the cost of sending Laxman back home, for it is well known that Laxman's love, affection and devotion for the Lord is no less than that of Bharat. Hence, I don't think Lord Ram will displease Laxman just in order to oblige Bharat, for the Lord treats all individuals alike, and since both Laxman and Bharat have equal love and devotion for him, it is unlikely that he would prefer one over the other.]¹ (6)

[Note—¹This is king Janak's take in response to Sunayana's proposal that it would be welcomed if Bharat is given permission to accompany Lord Ram to the forest by replacing Laxman who would be advised to return home.

Janak says that he has strong reservations in this regard for he doubts very much if this option would work, even though everyone may approve of it. The reason Janak cites is very logical—that since Lord Ram is known to be dispassionate and neutral, since he knows that both Laxman and Bharat love him dearly, that they are equally devoted to him, it is obvious that the Lord would find it impossible to side with one in order to oblige him or accommodate him and displease the other in the process.

Besides, there was another ticklish problem. King Dasrath had given his word to Kaikeyi that Bharat would get the throne, for this was the main reason why Kaikeyi had raised a storm and wanted to remove Lord Ram from the scene to prevent him creating any obstacle in Bharat's path by putting forward his claim to the throne by the virtue of his being the eldest of the four brothers, and hence has the right to inherit the crown. On the contrary, Laxman was not bound by any conditions; he was not even in line to be declared as a crown prince by Dasrath, for there was no mention of it at any time. Laxman had accompanied Lord Ram to the forest out of his own free will, with the full knowledge of the king who had not objected to this. Hence, if

Bharat is to go to the forest and Laxman was to be sent back, it would be a double violation of the words of Dasrath—because, one, Bharat does not get the crown, and two, he goes to the forest instead, neither of which Dasrath had wished.

These arguments simply mean that this solution— of Bharat accompanying Lord Ram to the forest, and Laxman returning home— is not workable, for it is sure that Lord Ram would not let Laxman down by ordering the latter to go back to Ayodhya, as it would break Laxman's heart. It ought to be noted at this juncture that the Lord had himself given Laxman his permission to come along to the forest*1, so would it not mean that the Lord is going back on his own words if he tells Laxman to return at this point of time? {*1 =Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 72 along with Chaupai line no. 1 that follow it.}]

परमारथ स्वारथ सुख सारे । भरत न सपनेहुँ मनहुँ निहारे ॥ ७ ॥
साधन सिद्धि राम पग नेहू । मोहि लखि परत भरत मत एहू ॥ ८ ॥

paramāratha svāratha sukha sārē. bharata na sapanēhum' manahum' nihārē.

7.

sādhana sid'dhi rāma paga nēhū. mōhi lakhi parata bharata mata ēhū. 8.

[Continuing with his praise for Bharat, king Janak says:] 'Bharat pays no attention to anything such as what is good for his fate in the spiritual sphere (paramāratha) or what would serve his interests in the worldly realm (svāratha).

He has never paid any heed to what would give him happiness and joy either in the present world of wakefulness, or in the world of his dreams. (7)

In my view, as far as Bharat is concerned, there is only one source that would give him all sorts of happiness and successes in this world, and it is to have undiluted affection for the august feet of Lord Ram.' (8)

दो०. भोरेहुँ भरत न पेलिहहिं मनसहुँ राम रजाइ ।
करिअ न सोचु सनेह बस कहेउ भूप बिलखाइ ॥ २८९ ॥

dōhā.

bhōrēhum' bharata na pēlihahim' manasahum' rāma rajā'i.
kari'a na sōcu sanēha basa kahē'u bhūpa bilakhā'i. 289.

Concluding his views vis-à-vis Bharat and his relationship with Lord Ram, Janak became overwhelmed with emotions as said to Sunayana: 'In my opinion, Bharat would never go against the wishes of Lord Ram under any circumstance. Hence, you must not be unduly perturbed in this regard due to your affection for him (Bharat).¹' (Doha no. 289)

[Note—¹King Janak told his wife Sunayana that she must desist from getting unduly upset about the prospects of what course the things would take with regards to the outcome of the conference between Lord Ram and Bharat. She must not insist that he, i.e. king Janak, should put pressure of any kind during the meeting in order to

influence Lord Ram to take Bharat with him and let Laxman return home. It would be best to leave it to the Lord to decide the matter, for if the Lord does not want Bharat to disobey their father Dasrath by going with him to the forest even though Bharat would like to do so, then it is sure that Bharat would prefer to obey the Lord and keep his wish above everything else. Lord Ram may also not like to make Laxman feel sad and betrayed if he allows Bharat to accompany him to the forest and order Laxman to return home. Surely, Lord Ram will not let Laxman down at any cost. Hence, the option of Laxman returning home and Bharat replacing him is not feasible.

Bharat has such a close relationship with the Lord, a relationship that exists at a transcendental level of the Consciousness, that the two can converse with each other, they can share each other's views and wishes on any given subject, at a plane that no other person can understand. This idea is amply clear in what Janak says in Chaupai line nos. 5 and 7-8 that precede this Doha no. 289 herein above.]

चौ०. राम भरत गुन गनत सप्रीती । निसि दंपतिहि पलक सम बीती ॥ १ ॥

राज समाज प्रात जुग जागे । न्हाइ न्हाइ सुर पूजन लागे ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

rāma bharata guna ganata saprītī. nisi dampatihi palaka sama bītī. 1.
rāja samāja prāta juga jāgē. nhā'i nhā'i sura pūjana lāgē. 2.

The night passed very quickly as if in an instant while the couple (king Janak and his wife Sunayana) fondly recounted the different virtues and glories of Lord Ram and Bharat. (10)

As the day dawned the next morning, both the royal camps (Janak's and Bharat's) woke up from their sleep. People took their daily bath and offered worship to the gods. (2)

गे नहाइ गुर पहिं रघुराई । बंदि चरन बोले रुख पाई ॥ ३ ॥

नाथ भरतु पुरजन महतारी । सोक बिकल बनबास दुखारी ॥ ४ ॥

gē nahā'i gura pahim raghurāī. bandi carana bōlē rukha pāī. 3.
nātha bharatu purajana mahatārī. sōka bikala banabāsa dukhārī. 4.

Lord Ram took his bath and went to meet his guru, sage Vasistha. The Lord paid his respects at the holy feet of his guru, and having received the latter's permission, the Lord said --- (3)

'Oh Lord (nātha)! Bharat, the citizens and the mothers—all of them are enduring hardships and suffering a lot in the forest'¹. (4)

[Note—¹In this context, refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 248 where we read that Lord Ram had approached sage Vasistha and said a similar thing.]

सहित समाज राउ मिथिलेसू । बहुत दिवस भए सहत कलेसू ॥ ५ ॥
उचित होइ सोइ कीजिअ नाथा । हित सबही कर रौं हाथा ॥ ६ ॥

sahita samāja rā'u mithilēsū. bahuta divasa bha'ē sahata kalēsū. 5.
ucita hō'i sō'i kīji'a nāthā. hita sabahī kara raurēm hāthā. 6.

Not only the citizens of Ayodhya, but even the king of Mithila (i.e. king Janak) and his party have also been suffering for so many days. (5)

Oh Lord, therefore it's my earnest request to thee to do something that is fit for this occasion. Everyone's good and welfare lie in thy hands¹. (6)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 248.]

अस कहि अति सकुचे रघुराऊ । मुनि पुलके लखि सीलु सुभाऊ ॥ ७ ॥
तुम्ह बिनु राम सकल सुख साजा । नरक सरिस दुहु राज समाजा ॥ ८ ॥

asa kahi ati sakucē raghurā'ū. muni pulakē lakhi sīlu subhā'ū. 7.
tumha binu rāma sakala sukha sājā. naraka sarisa duhu rāja samājā. 8.

Saying this (as narrated herein above), Lord Ram (the Lord of the Raghus; “raghurā'ū”) felt very hesitant to elaborate anything further or say anything decisively in the matter under the present situation¹.

Sage Vasistha was thrilled to observe Lord Ram's polite manners and good nature. (7)

The sage said: ‘Oh Lord Ram! Without you, all the comforts and pleasures of home and the world at large are like hell for the subjects of both the kingdoms (i.e. for the people of Ayodhya as well as Janakpur)². (8)

[Note—¹Lord Ram wished that sage Vasistha, being the senior most sage in the company as well as the Lord's revered guru, must intervene decisively and chalk out a plan that would end the stalemate. The Lord was very upset by the suffering everyone was subjected to because of him, and he saw no way out of the vexed issue as he was obliged to proceed to the forest in order to fulfill his twin mandates, one being to obey his father's words, and the other being the eliminating the demons. Both these two objectives would fail if he yielded to emotions and accepted Bharat's and others' wish to return home to Ayodhya. Hence, the Lord sought sage Vasistha's guidance in this regard.

²To wit, a devotee would want nothing else but closeness with the Lord so that he can serve the Lord he loves dearly from his heart. Material comforts and pleasures of the gross world do not attract him in the least.

The sage mentions the subjects of two kingdoms—viz. “duhu rāja samājā”, a clear reference to Ayodhya and Janakpur, for these were the two kingdoms that

were directly affected by the developments. The effect on Ayodhya is obvious and apparent because it was the kingdom of which Lord Ram was the prince, while that on Janakpur will be clear when we remember that it was the maternal home of Sita. It ought to be noted here that citizens of both the kingdoms had assembled at Chitrakoot in an attempt to persuade Lord Ram to return home. Those from Ayodhya had come with Bharat, while those from Janakpur had come with king Janak, the father of Sita and father-in-law of Lord Ram. The sufferings were equal for both the camps.

We must remember that a similar sentiment was expressed by the people of Ayodhya at the time Lord Ram departed for the forest*1, and also by Bharat later on*2.

{Refer: *1 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 84 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede it.

*2 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 178.}]

दो०. प्रान प्रान के जीव के जिव सुख के सुख राम ।

तुम्ह तजि तात सोहात गृह जिन्हहि तिन्हहि बिधि बाम ॥ २९० ॥

dōhā.

prāna prāna kē jīva kē jiva sukha kē sukha rāma.

tumha taji tāta sōhāta gr̥ha jinhahi tinhahi bidhi bāma. 290.

Oh Lord Ram! You are at the core of life itself; you are the very essence of one's soul; and you are the primary joy amongst the host of joys that exist in this world.

[To wit, there is no life without you; there is no soul without you; and there is no joy and happiness without you.]¹

If anyone abandons you or turns away from you to find happiness and joy in a home, then surely and without gainsay the Creator is opposed to such a person.

[To wit, a person is most unfortunate and stupid if he turns away from Lord God and finds attraction in the affairs of the gross mundane world. Such a person dooms his own destiny and is responsible for all the sufferings in life. Since the Creator is the one who had written about the person's destiny, it is said here that the Creator is unfavourable towards this person as he has motivated this person to turn away from the Lord God represented by Lord Ram.]² (Doha no. 290)

[Note—¹A similar idea is also expressed elsewhere in Ram Charit Manas. For instance, refer to: (a) Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 117; (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 217; (b) Ayodhya Kand, (iii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 56; (iv) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 74.

²Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 84; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 280.]

चौ०. सो सुखु करमु धरमु जरि जाऊ । जहँ न राम पद पंकज भाऊ ॥ १ ॥

जोगु कुजोगु ग्यानु अग्यानु । जहँ नहिं राम पेम परधानू ॥ २ ॥

तुम्ह बिनु दुखी सुखी तुम्ह तेहीं । तुम्ह जानहु जिय जो जेहि केहीं ॥ ३ ॥

caupāṭi.

sō sukhu karamu dharamu jari jā'ū. jaham' na rāma pada pañkaja bhā'ū. 1.
jōgu kujōgu gyānu agyānū. jaham' nahim rāma pēma paradhānū. 2.
tumha binu dukhī sukhī tumha tēhīm. tumha jānahu jiya jō jēhi kēhīm. 3.

Where there is no love and devotion for the holy feet of Lord Ram, let all other blessings of the world such as happiness and joy, as well as merit accrued by such things as doing auspicious deeds and upholding the principles of righteousness, probity and propriety be burnt and reduced to ash.

[To wit, if one does not have love and devotion for the Lord God, then all other joys, merits and blessings of the world become null and void for him; they are useless and without any value for him.] (1)

If love for Lord Ram is not the central theme of Yoga and Gyan, if this is not their aim and objective in one's life, then such Yoga and Gyan are worthless.

[To wit, that 'Yoga' (meditation and contemplation that helps a person to establish oneness with the Lord God; the spiritual practice that brings about the union of the individual's soul with the supreme Soul of creation) in which attainment of Lord Ram is not the aim or which does not have the Lord as its focal point, and that 'Gyan' (gnosis; knowledge of the Truth; spiritual wisdom) that does not focus on Lord Ram and leads to God-realisation—both of them are fruitless and useless.] (2)

Without you everyone is unhappy; and whosoever is happy is because he has you with him.

[To wit, the only way by which a person can find true happiness and peace in life is to be near to you, and hold you dear to his heart. This is the key to happiness and blissfulness in life.]¹ (3)

[Note—¹Sage Vasistha told Lord Ram: “That comfort and happiness, that deed and ritual, and that Dharma (duty and religious observance) in which there is no devotion for Lord Ram and which does not arouse love and submission for Lord Ram's lotus like feet—let all them be burnt down. Any union should be regarded as sorrowful and bad, any knowledge should be deemed to be as useless as ignorance—if they do have love for Lord Ram as the main component. If anyone is happy it is because of you, or because of your company, or because you reside in his heart, or because you are pleased with him, and if anyone is unhappy it is because of the opposite circumstances than these.

Let all Sukha (happiness and comfort), Karma and Dharma (deeds and laws of conduct) burn down where there is no love for the holy feet of Lord Ram. All righteous efforts become unrighteous, all good fortunes and luck turn to be misfortunes and ill-luck, and all types of knowledge and wisdom become as worthless as false and misleading knowledge—when there is no love for Lord Ram, or where love and devotion for the Lord does not dominate such efforts, such knowledge and such fortunes.”]

राउर आयसु सिर सबही कें । बिदित कृपालहि गति सब नीकें ॥ ४ ॥

आपु आश्रमहि धारिअ पाऊ । भयउ सनेह सिथिल मुनिराऊ ॥ ५ ॥

करि प्रनामु तब रामु सिधाए । रिषि धरि धीर जनक पहिं आए ॥ ६ ॥

rā'ura āyasu sira sabahī kēm. bidita kṛpālahi gati saba nīkēm. 4.
 āpu āśramahi dhāri'a pā'ū. bhaya'u sanēha sithila munirā'ū. 5.
 kari pranāmu taba rāmu sidhā'ē. riṣi dhari dhīra janaka pahim ā'ē. 6.

[Sage Vasistha continued:] 'Oh Lord (rā'ura)! Thy majesty's commands are to be accepted by all with a bowed head. [To wit, whatever you decide, whatever you say, whilst be accepted by everyone without questioning it. No one wouldst challenge it; no one wouldst ask questions.]

Thine merciful and compassionate self (kṛpālahi) art fully acquainted with the situation and all its aspects, as well as what everyone wants, and what wouldst be in their best of interests. [Oh Lord, thou knowest the different options that are available. This being the case, I have nothing to say in the matter. Thou art wise and intelligent; thou art an expert in all spheres and competent to take correct decisions on all matters after weighing all the pros and the cons. Hence, my humble submission is that instead of asking me to something to resolve the vexed issue, thou art ought to intervene in the matter and pronounce a course of action, which I assure thee, wouldst be accepted by one and all. Thou art compassionate, gracious and judicious; thine decision is sure to factor in all aspects of the matter, and wouldst be for the welfare and good for everyone in the long run; it wouldst be in the larger interests of not only the two societies of Ayodhya and Janakpur, but also the people of the world at large, as well as the gods. So therefore, my view is straight and simple: please take a final call on the matter and pronounce your decision.]¹ (4)

Please return to thy hermitage (whilst I shalt go and brief king Janak about our meeting, so that further steps can be initiated in coordination with each other).²

Saying this, the sage who was like a king in the society of sages (munirā'ū) became overwhelmed with affection (for Lord Ram). (5)

Thereafter, Lord Ram bowed his head reverentially before the sage and departed from there (to return to his own hermitage).

The sage, meanwhile, got up patiently and went to meet king Janak (to brief the latter about the conversation he had with Lord Ram). (6)

[Note—¹Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 269.

²We can easily conclude here that sage Vasistha has declined to intervene personally in the matter and suggest any direct solution to the vexed issue. The reason is obvious—he was fully aware of who Lord Ram actually was, and the primary reason why the Lord had gone to the forest. To wit, Vasistha knew that Lord Ram was not an ordinary human being but a manifested form of the Supreme Being who had come to earth with the primary mission of eliminating the scourge of the tyrannical reign of the demons so that the rule of law and principles of Dharma, that had taken a beating under the relentless onslaught of the ferocious demons, can be restored in the world, and people can live in peace. This objective can only be achieved if Lord Ram proceeds with his journey to the forest, and beyond to Lanka, the island infested by the demon race.

Further, the sage was also aware that Lord Ram loved all his three brothers, i.e. Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan, equally, and therefore it would not be possible for him to take side with one and offend or cause sadness to the other for no fault of his.

Hence, the wise sage decided to remain neutral in the matter, and let Lord Ram instead decide the matter, for the sage was sure that, one, the Lord's decision would be judicious, and two, that it would be accepted by all concerned.]

राम बचन गुरु नृपहि सुनाए । सील सनेह सुभायँ सुहाए ॥ ७ ॥
महाराज अब कीजिअ सोई । सब कर धरम सहित हित होई ॥ ८ ॥

rāma bacana guru nṛpahi sunā'ē. sīla sanēha subhāyam' suhā'ē. 7.
mahārāja aba kiji'a sō'ī. saba kara dharama sahita hita hō'ī. 8.

Whatever Lord Ram had told sage Vasistha¹, the latter recounted it before king Janak while emphasizing on the Lord's courteous and good nature, his modesty and humility, and other excellent aspects of the Lord's character. (7)

After that, the sage said to king Janak, 'Oh Great King (mahārāja)! Please do something now that would conform to the principles of Dharma (i.e. would be in accordance to the principles of righteousness, probity, propriety, ethical conduct and good behaviour) besides being for the good and welfare for everyone.'² (8)

[Note—¹Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-7 that precede Doha no. 290 herein above.

²A very interesting observation can be made here. As any reader would have noted by now, no one amongst the seniors, such as Lord Ram himself*1, as well as sage Vasistha*2 and king Janak*3, wants to directly intervene. Everyone is putting the burden on the other person's shoulders; everyone is deferring the matter and desisting from making any pronouncement. But in the end, all were of the unanimous view that what Lord Ram says would be accepted*4.

{Refer: *1 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 259; (ii) Doha no. 264; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 3-6 that precede Doha no. 290.

*2 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 254 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it; (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 258; (iii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 291. Here we find that Vasistha has cleverly deflected the onus of taking any decision himself, and put it on the shoulders of either Lord Ram or Bharat as the situation arose.

*3 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 289 along with Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precede it (where we read that Janak has politely declined to accept his wife Sunayana's proposal that he, being the senior-most member of the two families after the death of king Dasrath, should take a firm stand and decide the matter by proposing to send Bharat with Lord Ram to the forest, and let Laxman return home.

*4 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 254 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it; (ii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 266; (iii)

Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 269; (iv) Doha no. 289; (v) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 291.}]

दो०. ग्यान निधान सुजान सुचि धरम धीर नरपाल ।

तुम्ह बिनु असमंजस समन को समरथ एहि काल ॥ २९१ ॥

dōhā.

gyāna nidhāna sujāna suci dharama dhīra narapāla.
tumha binu asamanjasa samana kō samaratha ēhi kāla. 291.

[Sage Vasistha continued his request to king Janak to intervene in the matter and steer the course of action in a wise and judicious manner even as he praised the king and said—] ‘Oh noble King (narapāla), thy art a treasure of knowledge and wisdom; thou art an expert in all matters related to statecraft, polity and diplomacy; thou art polite and courteous; thou art steadfast in practicing the principles of Dharma; and thou havest the valuable qualities of patience, forbearance and resilience to cope with the most adverse of circumstances.

Verily, these virtues make you abundantly competent to find a resolution to the most complicated of problems. Hence, who else other than thee would be more suitable and able to find a solution to the dilemma faced by everyone at this crucial juncture?¹ (Doha no. 291)

[Note—¹Sage Vasistha now puts the burden to find a solution on Janak’s shoulders. Earlier he had deflected the issue, and instead of advising something himself he had asked Lord Ram to heed what Bharat had to say in the matter—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 258 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it.

A little later, Vasistha once again puts the onus of taking a final call on what is to be done next upon the shoulders of Lord Ram, instead of assuring the Lord that he would intervene personally and decide the matter—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 291.]

चौ०. सुनि मुनि बचन जनक अनुरागे । लखि गति ग्यानु बिरागु बिरागे ॥ १ ॥

सिथिल सनेहँ गुनत मन माहीं । आए इहाँ कीन्ह भल नाही ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sunī muni bacana janaka anurāgē. lakhi gati gyānu birāgu birāgē. 1.
sithila sanēhamṁ gunata mana māhīm. ā’ē ihāmṁ kīnha bhala nāhīm. 2.

Hearing the words of the sage (Vasistha), king Janak was overwhelmed with waves of affection and love for Lord Ram that swept over his inner being.

His emotional condition was such that when those who were called enlightened, and who usually remained dispassionate and detached from the world, saw him, they themselves found it difficult to restrain their emotions and remain unaffected by the feelings of affection and love for the Lord that had so deeply influenced Janak¹. (1)

The emotions of love and affection had numbed king Janak so much so that by this time he was finding himself dumbfounded and in a quandary, not knowing what to do and how to respond to what Vasistha had said.

He rued over the matter and privately regretted: ‘I have not done the right thing by coming here (to Chitrakoot)². (2)

[Note—¹To wit, Janak’s purity of heart as well as his emotions of love and affection for Lord Ram were very infective by their nature as they were of a holy kind. These emotions were not related to the gross world and the attachment that a worldly person has with it; they were of a higher plane of existence and pertained to the relationship that inherently exists between an individual creature’s soul and the Supreme Soul of this creation that was represented by Lord Ram.

Janak was a widely respected as self-realized, wise and enlightened soul, and hence his relationship with Lord Ram must be understood in the right background and from a different angle that transcends the grossness of mundane existence.

Thus, king Janak’s emotions and reactions when it came to Lord Ram had a divine aura about them, and he influenced all those who were around him in the same way as the brilliant rays of the sun radiate out from it to illuminate and provide warmth to the rest of the world around it.

Therefore, other great souls who were like Janak himself, those who lived in a state of consciousness that transcended the mundane gross world, those exalted souls who had established a communion with Lord God and were god-realized like king Janak, i.e. those god-realized souls whose spiritual vibrations synchronized with that of Janak—they were the ones who were affected by Janak’s emotions for Lord Ram, because it resonated with their own emotions for the Lord.

²Why did king Janak regret? Well, there are some obvious reasons for it.

First of all, what happened in Ayodhya was primarily a family affair, having its genesis in a palace intrigue where one selfish queen (Kaikeyi) wanted to foist her own son (Bharat) on the throne of the kingdom by having him anointed as its next king, by prevailing upon the king, who was under some earlier obligation to her, and forcing him to undermine traditional rules of inheritance and superseding his eldest son (Lord Ram) who had the right to ascend the throne according to established laws.

In the second place, no invitation had been sent by any authority of Ayodhya, such as a minister, councilor, advisor or commander, or for that matter any senior member of the kingdom’s administrative hierarchy, including king Dasrath or even Lord Ram who had the right to ascend the throne, to intervene and prevent the feud that had suddenly erupted in Ayodhya, and which may have catastrophic consequences for the stability, peace and security of the entire kingdom, from spiraling out of control, by acting as a mediator in order to find an amicable solution to the quagmire.

When the word about the sad and unfortunate developments in Ayodhya spread far and wide, as was expected because at that time in history this kingdom was very famous, and any important development in it could not remain secret for long, the tidings had also reached the ears of king Janak*1 who then dispatched his trusted spies to find out what had happened. It were these spies of king Janak who had informed him of the developments in detail*2, but it ought to be noted that no direct word was sent to him by anyone from Ayodhya to come quickly and mediate.

This being the case and the fact of the matter as it stands, even an ordinary common sense would tell us that in this background, it would be highly improper for a

great king of an independent kingdom to intervene uninvited in family matters and political intrigue of another independent kingdom.

Janak actually had established such a close, friendly and emotional bond with the royal family of Ayodhya, that was further cemented by the fact that a matrimonial relationship had also been established between his family and that of king Dasrath, that for all practical purposes, king Janak had treated king Dasrath's family as his own extended family. That is why he decided to intervene unilaterally.

But by the time Janak came to know of the details from his spies, Bharat had already started on his journey for Chitrakoot. So, Janak had no option left but to proceed directly to the forest*3.

{Refer: *1 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 271.

*2 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 271—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 272.

*3 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-5 that precede Doha no. 272.}

As far as this went, it was alright. Janak had thought that if he kept quiet even after learning about the sad developments in Ayodhya, it would not look good in the eyes of the world, especially in the backdrop of his family having a close matrimonial relationship with king Dasrath's family, and with the death of Dasrath when the latter's family was in the throes of a tumultuous development that has thrown the kingdom into a catastrophic spin of unprecedented proportions—in this situation, to keep mum and remain indifferent would invite ridicule and scorn from the world, for everyone would expect that Janak, being a wise and intelligent king as well as a senior member of the two families tied closely by matrimonial bonds, plays a positive, a constructive role and do his bit to end the crisis and bring normality.

But the problem, as the distraught king Janak discovered when he actually reached Chitrakoot and got first-hand knowledge of the affair, was more complicated and much graver than what he had envisaged. He discovered that even the great sage Vasistha had found it difficult to resolve the issue, and no senior member of Ayodhya's council of ministers and advisors was willing to interfere. Besides this, Lord Ram and Bharat themselves were unable to arrive at a consensus and find a common ground to resolve the vexed issue. As we have repeatedly observed, everyone was trying to deflect the issue and put the burden on someone else. Being the senior most member of the two families, as well as a wise, judicious and a highly respected king who was honoured for his enlightened view on any matter, he wanted to remain neutral and not show sides with anyone.

This is why Janak found himself caught in a quandary—not being able to decide what to do and what not to do. This is also why he laments his decision to come to Chitrakoot uninvited, though his intentions were noble, sincere and pure.

Janak himself expresses his regrets, and then goes on to explain why he is sorry that he came to intervene uninvited in verse nos. 3-4 that follow herein below.]

रामहि रायँ कहेउ बन जाना । कीन्ह आपु प्रिय प्रेम प्रवाना ॥ ३ ॥

हम अब बन तें बनहि पठाई । प्रमुदित फिरब बिबेक बड़ाई ॥ ४ ॥

rāmahi rāyam̐ kahē'u bana jānā. kīnha āpu priya prēma pravānā. 3.
hama aba bana tēm̐ banahi paṭhā'ī. pramudita phiraba bibēka baṛā'ī. 4.

The king (Dasrath) had ordered Lord Ram to go to the forest, and then the king had proved his love and loyalty for the Lord by laying down his own life as a sacrifice made on the altar of devotion for the Lord¹. (3)

But alas, it is such an irony that here we are who would now be sending the same Lord further and deeper into the forest instead of taking him back to his kingdom, and then we shall gladly return home as if we have done a great job over which we ought to gloat!² (4)

[Note—¹King Dasrath was forced by Kaikeyi under oath to send Lord Ram to the forest. The helpless king felt hapless as he could not resist Kaikeyi because he was bound under oath and reminded of an earlier word of honour that he had given to Kaikeyi but was still pending for redemption. It was this pending promise that Kaikeyi exploited. But unfortunately, Dasrath had to bear the brunt of ignominy and scorn from the world for sending Lord Ram to the forest, for everyone said that the king was equally to be blamed for the Lord being banished to the forest*1. It was so unfortunate that even Lord Ram himself had singled out the poor king for sending him to the forest for fourteen years and live like a hermit*2.

King Dasrath however was a mere victim of circumstances, and he had felt absolutely broken and ruined by this development which he could not control; he lamented that he could not go against the tide of time*3. But he wanted to prove to the world that he was innocent; that his love, affection and devotion for Lord Ram must not be questioned; that the a malicious Creator, the evil fiat of Fate, the cruelty of Destiny, and harsh provisions of Providence were responsible for compelling him to do what he did not want to do.

So, towards this end, Dasrath decided to sacrifice his own life to prove his point. He died while grieving and lamenting for Lord Ram, with the name of the Lord on his lips during his final moments*4.

{Refer: *1 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 89; (ii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 110; (iii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 122.

*2 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 88.

*3 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 29 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede it; (ii) Doha no. 35—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 37.

*4 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 153—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 156.}

²King Janak compares himself with king Dasrath. He laments sorely about his own misfortune and says: “Though the world accuses Dasrath for sending Lord Ram to the forest, yet the king had proven himself innocent and done enough of repentance by sacrificing his own life on the altar of love for the Lord to establish how greatly he loved Lord Ram actually, though he had become a helpless victim of circumstances.

But look now, here we are all who openly profess love for Lord Ram and had even tried to show our affection and devotion for him by coming all the way from our kingdoms to Chitrakoot with the avowed aim of taking the Lord back to Ayodhya, but what do we actually do on the ground? Instead of taking him back, we would be

agreeing to send him further on into the depths of the wilds. Not only this; whereas Dasrath died when his attempts to prevail upon the Lord to return home failed, we will return home alive to live and enjoy life.

How regrettable and lamentable and condemnable is this! Does it not prove that king Dasrath's love for Lord Ram was purer than ours; does it not show that all our show of solidarity for the Lord, all our professed love and affection for the Lord, were superficial and pretentious? If it is not so, let me see who amongst us would die here, instead of returning home to live in a prosperous city while Lord Ram suffers the hardships of a forest life?"']

तापस मुनि महिसुर सुनि देखी । भए प्रेम बस बिकल बिसेषी ॥ ५ ॥

समउ समुझि धरि धीरजु राजा । चले भरत पहिं सहित समाजा ॥ ६ ॥

tāpasa muni mahisura suni dēkhī. bha'ē prēma basa bikala bisēṣī. 5.
sama'u samujhi dhari dhīrajū rājā. calē bharata pahim̐ sahita samājā. 6.

Mystics, sages, learned Brahmins, and the Gods—when they saw Janak's predicament and heard what he thought, all of them felt an overwhelming sense of distress themselves, and were overcome by emotions of love and affection just like Janak was. (5)

Weighing all the pros and cons of the matter, and taking into consideration the practical aspects of the situation, king Janak collected his wits together and regained his composure¹.

Then he left his camp along with the members of his entourage, and went to meet Bharat. (6)

[Note—¹Janak realized that he had a crucial role to play: he was the senior most member of the two royal families, and everyone was now looking upto him to intercede and find a solution. He was a great king and a responsible person. A great responsibility was now on his shoulders; he could not afford to easily shrug it off.

So, though he was emotionally upset and would have preferred to be left alone, yet he decided that at this juncture it would be highly improper for him to rescind on his responsibilities and shy away from sharing the burden with others. He decided that he must help and do his bit as best as he could under the circumstances. He knew that he won't be able to change the course of destiny, but shying away and hiding himself would not only make him look like a coward but would also be a mockery of his reputation as a wise and intelligent king; it would be completely demeaning for his exalted stature.]

भरत आइ आगें भइ लीन्हे । अवसर सरिस सुआसन दीन्हे ॥ ७ ॥

तात भरत कह तेरहुति राऊ । तुम्हहि बिदित रघुबीर सुभाऊ ॥ ८ ॥

bharata ā'i āgēm̐ bha'i līnhē. avasara sarisa su'āsana dīnhē. 7.
tāta bharata kaha tērahuti rā'ū. tumhahi bidita raghubīra subhā'ū. 8.

When Bharat learnt that king Janak has come to meet him, he came forward to receive the king, and offered him a suitable seat to sit. (7)

The king of Tirhut (i.e. king Janak; “tērahuti rā'ū”) said to Bharat: ‘My dear Bharat (tāta bharata)! You are well aware of Lord Ram’s nature and disposition¹. (8)

[Note—¹The virtues of Lord Ram to which Janak refers here are enumerated briefly in Doha no. 292 herein below.]

दो०. राम सत्यव्रत धरम रत सब कर सीलु सनेहु ।
संकट सहत सकोच बस कहिअ जो आयसु देहु ॥ २९२ ॥

dōhā.

rāma satyabrata dharama rata saba kara sīlu sanēhu.
saṅkaṭa sahata sakōca basa kahi'a jō āyasu dēhu. 292.

Lord Ram upholds the virtue of ‘truth’ and keeps it sacrosanct (*satyabrata*); he faithfully follows the principles of Dharma (righteousness, auspiciousness, probity, propriety, goodness in thought and conduct) (*dharama rata*); he has affection for everyone and is polite towards all (*saba kara sīlu sanēhu*).

He is facing a lot of dilemma and perplexities because of his modest nature as he does not want to make anyone feel sad on his account. [So therefore, Lord Ram might not be able to decide what to do, for he would not want that any of his decisions would make others feel sad, sorry or distressed.]

This being the case, you say what you want, and then we shall tell the Lord what your wish is. [This will help the Lord overcome his dilemma and come to a decision.]¹ (Doha no. 292)

[Note—¹Once again we find here that even king Janak desists from making any firm proposal from his own side. We have already remarked earlier that no one is ready to firmly decide on the matter of what is to be done vis-à-vis the question of Lord Ram returning home or going ahead on his journey into the forest. Everyone has put the burden of making a proposal on Bharat’s shoulders. Earlier it was sage Vasistha who had done so*1, and Lord Ram too told Bharat that he should tell him what is to be done next*2. Even the gods have left everything on Bharat’s shoulders*3. And now we have king Janak asking Bharat to declare what he wants to be done.

{Refer: *1 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 258 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it.

*2 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 259.

*3 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 265—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 266.}

An interesting remark can be made here. By this time king Janak had become aware of the options that were available. First, he must have surely known the views of the citizens and what they wished*1.

Second, his wife Sunayana too had discussed with him the options that were on the table*2.

Third, Janak must surely have been briefed by sage Vasistha while the two had a personal meeting prior to the king going to meet Sita when she came to visit his camp. The fact that this meeting between Janak and Vasistha did take place is clearly hinted when we read that the king had sought Vasistha's permission to go and meet his daughter Sita*3.

{Refer: *1 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 280—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 281.

*2 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 287—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 290.

*3 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 286.}

This being the case, the question now arises 'why did Janak ask Bharat to disclose to him what was in his mind'. The answer is this: Janak wanted to know directly from Bharat what solution he proposed, because all earlier information that Janak had came indirectly to him, from other sources. So therefore, he wanted to have a first-hand and direct knowledge of Bharat's views on the matter.]

चौ०. सुनि तन पुलकि नयन भरि बारी । बोले भरतु धीर धरि भारी ॥ १ ॥

प्रभु प्रिय पूज्य पिता सम आपू । कुलगुरु सम हित माय न बापू ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sunī tana pulakī nayana bhari bārī. bōlē bharatu dhīra dhari bhārī. 1.

prabhu priya pūjya pitā sama āpū. kulaguru sama hita māya na bāpū. 2.

Hearing the affectionate and polite words of king Janak, Bharat's body was thrilled and tears welled up in his eyes even as he got himself together and replied to Janak with a lot of patience and self-control. (1)

Bharat said: 'My Lord (prabhu)! Thou art as revered for me as was my father (Dasrath). And as to my family's guru (i.e. sage Vasistha), he is more benevolent and kind towards me than my own parents would ever be. (2)

कौसिकादि मुनि सचिव समाजू । ग्यान अंबुनिधि आपुनु आजू ॥ ३ ॥

सिसु सेवकु आयसु अनुगामी । जानि मोहि सिख देइअ स्वामी ॥ ४ ॥

kausikādi muni saciva samājū. gyāna ambunidhi āpunu ājū. 3.

sisu sēvaku āyasu anugāmī. jāni mōhi sikha dē'i'a svāmī. 4.

Present here in this assembly are great sages, including the exalted sage Vishwamitra (kausikādi muni), besides wise ministers. All of them are an ocean of wisdom in their own right, and the best thing is that thee, who are an embodiment of wisdom, enlightenment and gnosis, are present here thyself in their midst today. (3)

Treating me as thy child and a humble servant who always would follow thine instructions, I request thee, my respected Lord (*svāmī*), to give me an appropriate advice on the matter.¹ (4)

[Note—¹As has been repeatedly observed by us, every time when the occasion arises when some firm decision is to be taken, those who are supposed to take it deflect the matter and put the burden on someone else to take a final call. We have seen this happening from the very beginning since Bharat came to Chitrakoot.

That said, the primary reason why Bharat does not want to propose anything at this juncture personally is that very senior persons are present on the occasion—such as sage Vishwamitra, king Janak and senior ministers, and it would not look good and decent for Bharat to act wise and propose a solution by speaking on their faces. It would have an adverse effect and give a wrong impression: it would mean that other senior persons are now expected to follow what Bharat wants, and it would be tantamount to kind of dictating terms of the solution to them. Bharat was a very polite, courteous and decent person, and as such he did not want to appear to violate decorum and protocol by undermining the authority and senior position of elders.]

एहिं समाज थल बूझब राउर । मौन मलिन मैं बोलब बाउर ॥ ५ ॥
छोटे बदन कहउँ बड़ि बाता । छमब तात लखि बाम बिधाता ॥ ६ ॥

ēhiṁ samāja thala būjhaba rā'ura. mauna malina mairṁ bōlaba bā'ura. 5.
chōṭē badana kaha'um̐ baḍi bātā. chamaba tāta lakhi bāma bidhātā. 6.

In this august assembly attended by such wise and senior persons, as well as at a place (i.e. Chitrakoot) that is so holy, thine asking me for a solution makes me dumbfounded, for if I keep mum it would give the impression that I am deceitful and have some conceit hidden in my heart, and if I speak out it would mean that I am mad and have lost my wits. (5)

Oh dear and revered Sir (*tāta*), I am a very humble person and much junior to all of you in every respect. Hence, that I dared to speak before thee, and had been bold enough to open my mouth before thee, seems to be an impudent act on mine part for which I beg thee to forgive me in the view of the circumstances that my mind is under the influence of a malicious Creator (and therefore it is not working properly)¹. (6)

[Note—¹Bharat has said a similar thing earlier also*1 during the conference in Ayodhya when sage Vasistha was trying to convince him to accept the crown, which Bharat had bluntly declined. {*1 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no.177.}

आगम निगम प्रसिद्ध पुराना । सेवाधरमु कठिन जगु जाना ॥ ७ ॥
स्वामि धरम स्वारथहि बिरोधू । बैरु अंध प्रेमहि न प्रबोधू ॥ ८ ॥

āgama nigama prasid'dha purānā. sēvādharamu kaṭhina jagu jānā. 7.
svāmi dharama svārathahi birōdhū. bairu andha prēmahi na prabōdhū. 8.

The Tantras, the Vedas and the Purans (i.e. the ancient scriptures) have affirmed, and it is also well known in the world, that the duties of a servant are indeed very difficult to carry out faithfully and diligently. (7)

Demands of doing one's duties to a master faithfully are incompatible with serving one's self interest¹.

Love and animosity are blind; they do not pay heed to wisdom and judgment².
(8)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 203 where Bharat has made a similar observation regarding the duties of a servant.

To understand this thing, let us suppose that a tired person wants to take rest, which is the interest of his body, but at the same time suppose the lord or the master asks that person to do something, such as to go on an errand. In this situation, a good and faithful servant would overlook his own interests, which lie in giving his body rest and comfort, but would willingly obey his master's command to go out on an errand immediately, without paying heed to the need to give his body some rest.

There are countless instances when a person's personal interests go against the call of duty to obey the orders of his lord or master.

In the case of Bharat, what he hints here is obvious—viz. his personal interest lies in accepting the crown and enjoying the pleasures and comforts that naturally come with being a king of a mighty kingdom, but his call of duty forbids him to do so, because his duty is to serve Lord Ram and obey the Lord's commands, to serve the kingdom under the stewardship of Lord Ram as his trusted and faithful lieutenant, his comrade-in-arm, his aide and assistant, his junior prince. Bharat has made this amply clear in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 178; (ii) Doha no. 182.

²Both 'love' and 'animosity' are said to be 'blind' because in these situations, the concerned person would be driven more by his emotions rather than by his rational mind. As such he would be prone to doing unimaginable and even most outrageous of things if he falls in love with anybody, or harbours animosity against anyone. He would be so mad and act so irrationally that he would fail to see the consequences of his actions and behaviour.

Once again, Bharat cites this example to say that his mind is at present not working properly, for currently he is so much driven by the emotions of love, affection and devotion for Lord Ram that they have completely eclipsed his judgment, and have forced him to act impudently and irrationally. So, everyone must forgive him for his behaviour.

Bharat also wants to say that besides this, like a man in love or a man under the influence of animosity who would not have anything but what he wants, he would not accept anything that would stand in the way of his expression of love and affection for Lord Ram, or in the way of his desire to serve the Lord devotedly.]

दो०. राखि राम रुख धरमु ब्रतु पराधीन मोहि जानि ।
सब कें संमत सर्व हित करिअ पेमु पहिचानि ॥ २९३ ॥

dōhā.

rākhi rāma rukha dharamu bratu parādhīna mōhi jāni.
saba kēm sammata sarba hita kari'a pēmu pahicāni. 293.

Urging the august assembly to consider all aspects of the situation, and after due diligence, it should take a decision that is most appropriate, Bharat says: 'Taking into account that I am not sufficiently independent to take any decision myself (because my mind is under the influence of a malicious Creator as well as overcome with emotions that has undermined my ability to think and decide on any matter properly and wisely), I earnestly beseech this august assembly to take a decision after judiciously considering and paying attention to all the aspects of the matter, such as the need to honour Lord Ram's wishes, the need to adhere to the principles of Dharma and conform with them, the need to keep everyone's welfare and interests in mind, and the need to factor in the bond of mutual love and affection that dominate our relationships (i.e. not only between me and Lord Ram, but also between all the four brothers).¹ (Doha no. 293)

[Note—¹Bharat says: "As I have already told you, my mind is under the influence of a malicious Creator*1, and it is also under the influence of emotions of love, affection and devotion for Lord Ram which has made me biased*2 and no less than a mad man who speaks incoherently*3. In this situation, what do you expect from me; how can I make a judicious suggestion as how to resolve this vexed issue?

So please decide on the matter, but keep in mind the four things I have told you—viz. we must honour Lord Ram's wish, we must adhere to the principles of Dharma, we must ensure that the welfare and good of all is ensured, and at the same time the love and affection that exist between all us four brothers, and especially that exists between me and Lord Ram, should also be kept in mind while arriving at a decision."

{Refer: *1 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 293.

*2 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 293.

*3 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 293.}]

चौ०. भरत बचन सुनि देखि सुभाऊ । सहित समाज सराहत राऊ ॥ १ ॥
सुगम अगम मृदु मंजु कठोरे । अरथु अमित अति आखर थोरे ॥ २ ॥
ज्यों मुखु मुकुर मुकुरु निज पानी । गहि न जाइ अस अब्हुत बानी ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

bharata bacana suni dēkhi subhā'ū. sahita samāja sarāhata rā'ū. 1.
sugama agama mṛdu maṅju kaṭhōrē. arathu amita ati ākhara thōrē. 2.
jyōm mukhu mukura mukuru nija pānī. gahi na jā'i asa adbhuta bānī. 3.

Hearing the polite words of Bharat, and observing his stellar nature (marked by courteousness, humility, purity and simplicity), the king (Janak), along with the rest of the assembly, began to praise him and extol his virtues. (1)

They unanimously said: ‘Bharat’s words are, *prima-facie*, plain and straightforward, hence easy to understand, but at the same time they have a lot of depth which makes them beyond the reach of understanding of a common man (*sugama agama*).

His words are sweet and spoken with politeness, but at the same time they are harsh and grave or serious in their intent (*mṛḍu maṇju kaṭhōrē*).

The words are very brief and concise in their format (*ati ākhara thōrē*), but their meaning is vast and encompass a wide canvass of principles (*arathu amita*). (2)

The words of Bharat (or, what Bharat has said) baffle the mind because they are like the case of a person who tries to catch hold of his own reflection which he sees in a mirror that he hold in his own hands, but fails to do so¹. (3)

[Note—¹A person sees his own face in a mirror and thinks that he would be able to touch it easily. But when he tries to actually do it, he fails, and this makes him feel baffled because he begins to wonder why is he unable to touch the person who is there right before him? He does not realize that the image seen in the mirror is merely a reflection and not the real thing.

Similarly, it is easy to understand the words of Bharat as they are simple and straightforward *prima facie*, but when one closely examines his speech and tries to analyse it to understand its actual meaning and intent, one is unable to do it, because behind these simple sounding words of Bharat, a lot of meaning with a lot of depth lie concealed.

It is easy to realize what Janak and others mean here. Bharat has laid down certain conditions that must be factored in while taking a decision, as is clear in Doha no. 293 herein above. Now, to fulfill all these conditions simultaneously seems a virtual impossibility because contradictory situations would arise. For instance, while the principle of Dharma ordains that the orders of a father must be obeyed, and hence Lord Ram ought to remain in the forest for fourteen years and Bharat should ascend the throne for the period*1, but that would be contrary to what Bharat and the rest of the citizens want, for all of them have only one desire that Lord Ram returns home immediately*2 and is forthwith crowned the king of the realm, even in the forest itself*3. Hence, the two objectives were so much diametrically opposite to each other that they can’t be reconciled.

This is what Janak and the other members of the august assembly mean—that though it seems easy to do as Bharat says, but when one gets down to thrash out a solution that would incorporate all the principles hinted by Bharat, the solution would elude everyone’s intelligence.

{Refer: *1 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 41—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 42; (ii) Doha no. 88 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 264.

*2 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 183; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 184; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 255.

*3 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 187; (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 268.}]

भूप भरतु मुनि सहित समाजू । गे जहँ बिबुध कुमुद द्विजराजू ॥ ४ ॥
 सुनि सुधि सोच बिकल सब लोगा । मनहुँ मीनगन नव जल जोगा ॥ ५ ॥

bhūpa bharatu muni sahita samājū. gē jaham̃ bibudha kumuda dvijarājū. 4.
 suni sudhi sōca bikala saba lōgā. manahum̃ mīnagana nava jala jōgā. 5.

Thereafter, king Janak, Bharat, the sages present on the occasion (such as Vasistha, Vishwamitra etc.) as well as all other members of the assembly went to the place where Lord Ram, who delights the gods just like the moon that gives joy to the lily flower¹, was present. (4)

When this news reached the people (the citizens), they became anxious and worried just like fish that gets agitated on coming in contact with water of the first shower of rain at the onset of the rainy season². (5)

[Note—¹The lily flower open its petals during the night under the moon's light. It is as if the flower enjoys the presence of the moon, or the moon gives a lot of joy to the flower so much so that it becomes thrilled and opens its petals in happiness.

Likewise, Lord Ram gladdened the hearts of the gods who feel exhilarated in the presence of the Lord, as he is their protector and well-wisher.

²Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 153. The first brief shower of the rain after hot summer days produces a lot of heat instead of having any cooling effect, because as drops of rain fall through hot air above the earth, they too become hot. Further, when rain drops fall on hot ground they immediately begin to turn into virtual steam, and steam is very hot and scalding.

So, the poor fish feels agitated and nervous as it fears being boiled alive, because it does not realize that this is merely a transitory affair and soon the environment would be cooled by the rain.

Presently, the citizens became anxious because they were uncertain about what would happen now. Earlier during the conference that was held before the arrival of king Janak, it was affirmed that what Lord Ram says would be obeyed, and everyone knew that Lord Ram would hardly go to the extent of breaking king Dasrath's words in order to please anyone simply because it would be against the principles of Dharma. Even Bharat seemed to have abandoned his hard-line approach and had come around to the view that it would be better for him to do as Lord Ram wishes, instead of foisting his own will on the Lord. {Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 266; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 2-7 that precede Doha no. 268; (iii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 269.}}

देवँ प्रथम कुलगुर गति देखी । निरखि बिदेह सनेह बिसेषी ॥ ६ ॥
 राम भगतिमय भरतु निहारे । सुर स्वारथी हहरि हियँ हारे ॥ ७ ॥
 सब कोउ राम पेममय पेखा । भए अलेख सोच बस लेखा ॥ ८ ॥

dēvam^ṛ prathama kulagura gati dēkhī. nirakhi bidēha sanēha bisēṣī. 6.
rāma bhagatimaya bharatu nihārē. sura svārathī hahari hiyam^ṛ hārē. 7.
saba kō'u rāma pēmamaya pēkhā. bha'ē alēkha sōca basa lēkhā. 8.

The gods first observed the attitude of the family's guru (kulagura)¹, sage Vasistha (and discovered that he would not be of any help to them as he would not insist on anything that goes against the wish of Bharat)²; then they closely examined and discovered that king Janak was overwhelmed with love and affection for Bharat (which meant that Janak would in all likelihood take the side of Bharat and endorse his wish to take Lord Ram back to Ayodhya)³. (6)

Then they saw that Bharat himself was like a personified image of love and affection for Lord Ram (and therefore he would not want that his beloved Lord suffers hardships in the forest, which implied that he would insist for Lord Ram returning home)⁴.

This situation caused a lot of bewilderment to the selfish gods (sura svārathī)⁵ who became disheartened and lost all hopes of having their own wish fulfilled.

[To wit, the gods became nervous that all things point in the direction that in all probability it would be difficult for Lord Ram to continue with his journey to the forest to eliminate the demons as the gods had wished, because the Lord would find it too hard to resist Bharat's pleadings to return home, more so because all seniors in the assembly would endorse Bharat.] (7)

Verily, when the gods observed to their dismay that everyone was infused with love and devotion for Lord Ram, they became very worried, disheartened and discouraged.

[The gods feared that Lord Ram would tend to honour the wish of his devotees, including Bharat and the rest of the citizens, and decide to return home for the present, keeping the mission of eliminating the demons pending for some future date. Should it happen, the whole planning of the gods would come crashing down.] (8)

[Note—¹The word used in the text is “kulagura”. Now, the word ‘kula’ means a family, a race, a clan that has a common ancestor. Hence, the word ‘kulagura’ could also refer to sage Brihaspati, who is the ‘guru’ of the gods, besides sage Vasistha who is the guru of the race of illustrious kings of Ayodhya, called the ‘Raghu Kula’ or the ‘Ikshwaku Kula’, to which Lord Ram belongs.

²The gods had no hope from support either from their own guru Brihaspati or from Lord Ram's guru sage Vasistha.

Sage Brishaspati has already told the gods that they are on the wrong path by trying to interfere with Bharat and creating nuisance with him, and hence he had advised them to desist from their evil designs. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 217—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 220; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 265—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 266}.

Similarly, sage Vasistha too has openly declared his view that the wish of Bharat stands sacrosanct, and what he says ought to be done. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 257; (ii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 258—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 259}.

³King Janak's view vis-à-vis Bharat are very obvious in the following verses of Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand: (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 288—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 290.

Hence, Janak speaking against Bharat's wishes was absolutely unlikely to happen.

⁴As for Lord Ram, his love for Bharat was legendary, and the Lord himself has minced no words to praise him*1. Besides it, even the great sage Bharadwaj has endorsed it as well*2.

{Refer: *1 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, *1 = Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 231—to Doha no. 232 (Lord Ram);

*2 = Doha no. 207—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 208; Chaupai line nos. 3-6 that precede Doha no. 210}.

⁵The gods have been called 'selfish' (sura svārathī) on different occasions in Ram Charit Manas—apropos: (a) Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 12; (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 220; (iii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 220; (iv) Doha no. 295 along with Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes it; (b) Lanka Kand, (v) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 110.]

दो०. रामु सनेह सकोच बस कह ससोच सुरराजु।

रचहु प्रपंचहि पंच मिलि नाहिं त भयउ अकाजु ॥ २९४ ॥

dōhā.

rāmu sanēha sakōca basa kaha sasōca surarāju.

racahu prapañcahi pañca mili nāhiṁ ta bhaya'u akāju. 294.

Indra, the king of the gods, became very worried and said in a pensive mood: 'Lord Ram is (always) influenced by the virtue of love (that a devotee has for him, in this case it is Bharat) so much so that the Lord would rarely displease those who love him (and are devoted to him).

This being the case, all of you get together and devise a clever stratagem (so that Bharat does not insist on taking Lord Ram back home, and the Lord can proceed with his mission to go further into the forest and fulfill his objective of eliminating the scourge of the tyrannical demons). Otherwise, everything will be ruined and all of us will be doomed.¹ (Doha no. 294)

[Note—¹In this context, refer to Chaupai line nos. 7-8 herein above that precede this Doha no. 294.

Indra has lost all hopes of support from even his own guru, sage Brihaspati, for, as we have already read earlier that on two occasions, the guru had not only declined to intervene but has also chastised Indra for trying any kind of wickedness with Bharat—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 217—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 220; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 265—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 266.

Hence, frustrated and dismayed, Indra decided to ask the gods to do something directly, for if they fail to prevent Lord Ram from going further on to the forest on his mission to eliminate the demons, then no one else but the gods themselves would have to suffer interminably, with no hope for redemption in the future. In fact, their horrors are bound to increase manifold because the demons would become more furious and ferocious once they come to learn that the Supreme Being had come down to the earth in the form of Lord Ram to help the gods get rid of the demons, but the same Lord had turned back half way and returned home.

This would give a wrong signal to the cruel demons who would interpret Lord Ram turning back and returning home midway through his mission as, one, the Lord's unwillingness to help the gods against the demons, and two, that the Lord realised that he is no match against the might of the demons, and so he prudently decided to save his face by returning home. This will only embolden the demons further, and they would unleash their worst of horrors on the gods as well as the rest of the creation to take revenge and punish the gods in a ferocious campaign of no-holds-barred act of retribution.]

चौ०. सुरन्ह सुमिरि सारदा सराही । देबि देव सरनागत पाही ॥ १ ॥

फेरि भरत मति करि निज माया । पालु बिबुध कुल करि छल छाया ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

suranha sumiri sārādā sarāhī. dēbi dēva saranāgata pāhī. 1.

phēri bharata mati kari nija māyā. pālu bibudha kula kari chala chāyā. 2.

[The gods got together and recalled that goddess Saraswati, called “sārādā”, had come to their help on an earlier occasion too¹. So they decided to seek her help now also.]

The gods invoked goddess Saraswati (sārādā) and praised her for her qualities². Then they prayed to her: ‘Oh Goddess (dēbi), all the gods (dēva) have come to take refuge with thy holiness, and we bow before thee in all humility³. (1)

Please employ thine powers of creating delusions (called “Maya”; “kari nija māyā”) to somehow make Bharat change his mind and abandon his stubbornness with plans to take Lord Ram back home to Ayodhya. By doing thus, thy wouldst be doing a great service to the whole community of gods by extending thy protective shield on them and protecting them from being certainly doomed. (2)

[Note—¹The gods had sought help from Saraswati so that Lord Ram is prevented from ascending the throne, and instead is made to go to the forest. Saraswati had agreed to help them at that time because she thought she would be serving a good cause for the protection and betterment of the whole world. So, in order to oblige the gods as well as help to serve the wider interest of restoring peace and rule of law in the whole world by creating a situation whereby the cruel demons are got rid of, she went and twisted the minds of Manthara, the maid of queen Kaikeyi, as well as the queen herself, so that they together contrived a wicked plan to force king Dasrath to send Lord Ram to the forest and Bharat, Kaikeyi's son, as the next king. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 11—to

Doha no. 12; (ii) Doha no. 16; (iii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 19; (iv) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 29.}

²When one has some kind of unconventional work to be got done through another person, and the chances are that the other person might feel reluctant to agree, then pampering the latter by praising him and glorifying his qualities, even if it is false and superficial, is a clever psychological tool or strategy to help break the barrier of resistance from the latter and make the other person more malleable, pliable and obliging, if nothing else than at least for the sense of good manners and courtesy—because the person to whom a request for help is being made would not like to do anything that would undermine the good impression that others have for him, and his ability and powers to help them.

We shall be reading by-and-by in this fascinating story that Ravana, the king of the demons, had adopted a similar strategy when he went to Marich to seek the latter's help to abduct Sita to settle scores with Lord Ram and Laxman for insulting his sister Supernakha whose nose and ears the Lord had got chopped off when she was creating nuisance to him. Ravana wanted Marich to assume the form of a golden deer for this purpose. Though inherently haughty and arrogant, but Ravana had become very polite and humble when he approached Marich, so that the latter would find it difficult, out of a sense of courtesy and good manners, to bluntly refuse to oblige. When a naturally wicked person, such as Ravana in this case, suddenly shows politeness and humility, it is a dangerous sign. This is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 24.

Incidentally, goddess Saraswati too had the same impression about the gods—that they are lowly, dumb-witted, pervert, and driven by self-interest. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 12.}

Presently we shall see herein below that on this present occasion too, Saraswati had a very poor opinion of the gods, and she not only chided them but refused to help them against Bharat like their guru had done earlier—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 295.

³Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 11; (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 12.

We read in the above verses that on that earlier occasion too, like the gods are doing now, they had fallen at Saraswati's feet repeatedly, with all humility, in order to make her agree to fulfill their request.]

बिबुध बिनय सुनि देबि सयानी । बोली सुर स्वारथ जड़ जानी ॥ ३ ॥
मो सन कहहु भरत मति फेरू । लोचन सहस न सूझ सुमेरू ॥ ४ ॥

bibudha binaya suni dēbi sayānī. bōlī sura svāratha jara jānī. 3.
mō sana kahahu bharata mati phērū. lōcana sahasa na sūjha sumērū. 4.

Hearing the prayers of the gods (bibudha) (asking her to play some dirty tricks with Bharat and force him to go back on his determination to take Lord Ram back home, and even nullifying his offer to go to the forest himself in place of the Lord), the wise goddess, being certain that the gods were truly selfish, pervert, and lowly in their minds¹, sternly rebuked Indra (the king of the gods) when she told him thus: --- (3)

‘Listen to me Indra! You are telling me to change the mind of Bharat, but it is so great an irony, and I pity you, that you are unable to see Mt. Sumeru (the golden mountains where the gods have their abode) even though you have a thousand eyes (lōcana sahāsa).

[Indra, I pity your intelligence and regret that you can’t see even the obvious. It is like the case of someone having a thousand eyes being unable to see the lofty mountain that stands tall and is easily identifiable because of its unique golden colour (sumērū). This is apparently because you are driven so much by selfishness that it has made you literally ‘blind’ to what is so clear and obvious; you aren’t able to ‘see’ that what you wish me to do would be an outright outrageous act which I shall never agree to do just in order to oblige you, and because you have shown so much courtesy to me as to bow repeatedly before me, which of course was also done by you out of your selfish nature.] (4)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 12; (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 220; (iii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 220; (iv) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 294; (v) Doha no. 295; (b) Lanka Kand, (vi) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 110.]

बिधि हरि हर माया बड़ि भारी । सोउ न भरत मति सकइ निहारी ॥ ५ ॥
 सो मति मोहि कहत करु भोरी । चंदिनि कर कि चंडकर चोरी ॥ ६ ॥
 भरत हृदयँ सिय राम निवासू । तहँ कि तिमिर जहँ तरनि प्रकासू ॥ ७ ॥
 अस कहि सारद गइ बिधि लोका । बिबुध बिकल निसि मानहुँ कोका ॥ ८ ॥

bidhi hari hara māyā baḍi bhārī. sō'u na bharata mati saka'i nihārī. 5
 sō mati mōhi kahata karu bhōrī. candini kara ki caṇḍakara cōrī. 6.
 bharata hṛdayam̐ siya rāma nivāsū. taham̐ ki timira jaham̐ tarani prakāsū. 7
 asa kahi sārada ga'i bidhi lōkā. bibudha bikala nisi mānahum̐ kōkā. 8.

Goddess Saraswati strongly admonished the gods, saying, ‘Listen oh Gods! The Maya (delusion creating powers) of Brahma (the creator), Vishnu (the sustainer and protector of creation) and Shiva (the concluder of creation) is very powerful. But even these individual forms of Maya are not able to even glance at Bharat with ill-intentions.

[To wit, since Bharat, the younger brother of Lord Ram, has the grand and powerful virtue of Bhakti in his heart, the Maya is afraid to annoy him so much so that it dares not look at Bharat with an evil eye. Maya knows that the Lord God, i.e. Lord Ram, will forgive her for all her mischief, but not for playing tricks with his devotee which Bharat was.] (5)

And you (the gods) want me to delude the mind of Bharat! Tell me, can the moon’s humble light ever dull the blazing light of the splendid sun?

[To wit, you have been blinded by selfishness so much that you don’t realise what you are saying. Just as it is impossible for the moon’s light to outshine the light of the radiant sun, it is impossible ever for anyone to delude the mind of someone

who has devotion for Lord Ram in his heart. So, don't ever think that I will be foolish enough to attempt to mislead Bharat just because you have asked me, for I am not as big a fool as thou obviously art to go the extent of fooling around with Lord Ram's devotee.] (6)

Lord Ram (the incarnate Supreme Being) and Sita (the incarnate Shakti of the Lord) are reverentially enshrined in the heart of Bharat. Say, can there ever be darkness where there is sunlight?

[Having the Lord enshrined in one's heart is a metaphoric way of saying that one has intense and the highest degree of the eclectic virtue of 'Bhakti' in him. Here, Bhakti has been compared to 'sunlight', and delusions to 'darkness'. The two can obviously never co-exist.]¹ (7)

Saying thus, goddess Saraswati went back to the abode of Brahma, the creator (*sārada ga'i bidhi lōkā*), leaving the gods confounded and distressed (as they lost all hopes of having their way in influencing Bharat's mind) in the same way as a Chakva bird feels distressed during the night². (8)

[Note—¹The fact that if a person has firm faith and devotion for Lord God, he remains out of bounds for Maya has been affirmed in the context of Bharat when it is said that Lord Ram and Sita are enshrined in the heart of Bharat like a deity is enshrined in a temple, and wherever there is the sun there can be no trace of darkness.

This universal truth has been affirmed by no less an authority than goddess Saraswati, the patron goddess of knowledge and wisdom. She told the gods about the importance of Bhakti when they had prayed to her so somehow persuade Bharat to change his mind and go back to Ayodhya instead of insisting on Lord Ram returning home as that would be detrimental to the job of eliminating the demons for which Lord Vishnu had come down to earth as Lord Ram.

The importance of Bhakti as a tool to overcome Maya is the focus of the advice contained in the aforesaid verses.

The importance of having Bhakti as a tool to overcome the negative influences of Maya has been stressed by sage Kaagbhusund to Garud in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1-8 that precedes Doha no. 116.

²This bird has a unique reputation that during daytime, the female and the male stay together, but as night falls they separate from one another. Hence, all through the night, both the male and the female bird remain distressed and confounded as each of them has lost its respective partner, and the whole world seems gloomy, hopeless and dark for them. The Gods were sorely disheartened and disappointed to find goddess Saraswati refusing to oblige them, and as they had pinned all their hopes on her.

Earlier goddess Saraswati had come to the aid of the gods when they had requested her to do something so that Lord Ram could go to the forest and fulfill his mandate to eliminate the demons led by Ravana, for she had, at that time, influenced the mind of Manthara, and then of Kaikeyi, which culminated in the Lord being sent to the forest*1.

At that time Saraswati had agreed to help because it was a simple matter of helping the Supreme Being to fulfill the promise he had made to the gods on an earlier occasion that he would come down as Lord Ram to eliminate the scourge of the demons*2, and it could only be done if the Lord went to the forest.

But now the situation was different: now Bharat, a true devotee of Lord Ram who loves the Lord more than his own life, has got involved. Doing anything that is against the will or the wish of the Lord's devotee would annoy the Lord more than anything else.

Hence, Saraswati declined to help the gods this time around, which in turn caused a lot of bewilderment to them.

{Refer: *1 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 11—to Doha no. 12.

*2 = Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 187.}]

दो०. सुर स्वारथी मलीन मन कीन्ह कुमंत्र कुठाटु ।

रचि प्रपंच माया प्रबल भय भ्रम अरति उचाटु ॥ २९५ ॥

dōhā.

sura svārathī malīna mana kīnha kumantra kuṭhāṭu.

raci prapañca māyā prabala bhaya bhrama arati ucāṭu. 295.

Realising to their dismay and consternation that goddess Saraswati has declined to help them, the selfish gods who were malicious as well in their hearts, and had crookedness in their minds, felt a lot of chagrin.

Nevertheless, determined to go ahead with their nefarious scheme, they shamelessly got together to plan a crooked way to give effect to their wishes, which they accomplished by spreading a magical cloud of delusions that created fear, uncertainty, doubts, confusions, anxiety and vexation in the minds of all concerned¹. (Doha no. 295)

[Note—¹As we shall read shortly, the persons most affected by the cloud of delusions spread by the gods that led to a lot of confusion and vexation were the ordinary citizens of Ayodhya and Janakpur. They were getting tired, bored and anxious because there seemed to be no solution in sight, and the inconveniences and harshness of life in the forest were getting on their nerves even as they started longing for their families and homes. This will be clear in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 302—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 303.

Though the web of delusions created by the gods spared none, including Bharat, but the question is “how much was Bharat affected; were the gods actually successful in deluding Bharat like others?”

Well, the answer is that the gods, having discovered that no one would interfere with Bharat, and they themselves were unable to supersede him, decided to surrender themselves before him and seek his help directly. When Bharat found that a big responsibility now rests on his shoulders, he decided to oblige the gods, because what they intended to do was for the greater good of the whole creation. So, he decided to not press on with his own desire to take Lord Ram back home, but leave the final decision in the hands of the Lord. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 265 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 266.}

The next verse no. 1 that follows herein below also reiterates that the gods surrendered themselves before Bharat and left their fate in his hands.]

चौ०. करि कुचालि सोचत सुरराजू । भरत हाथ सबु काजु अकाजू ॥ १ ॥

गए जनकु रघुनाथ समीपा । सनमाने सब रबिकुल दीपा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kari kucālī sōcata surarājū. bharata hātha sabu kāju akājū. 1.

ga'e janaku raghunātha samīpā. sanamānē saba rabikula dīpā. 2.

Even after creating nuisance or mischief by way of spreading the cloud of delusions that would cause a lot vexation, anxiety, boredom and doubts in the minds of everyone concerned, Indra, the king of gods, was in doubt himself if his endeavour would ever succeed at all without the help of Bharat; he concluded that the success or failure of his plans would ultimately depend on Bharat¹. (1)

In the mean time, king Janak (along with Bharat and the rest of senior members who were participating in the discussions to resolve the issue)² went to meet Lord Ram.

The Lord, who was like a lamp in his illustrious family descending from king Raghu (rabikula dīpā)³, welcomed everyone with due respect.⁴ (2)

[Note—¹Indra and his brother gods were so nervous and agitated that they have prayed to Bharat earlier on two occasions to help them by not pressing on with his demand that Lord Ram return home, but let the Lord proceed to the forest to complete his mission of eliminating the demons. This would be clear if we glance over the following verses of Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand: (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 219—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 220; (ii) Doha no. 265 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it.

This is the third time they are surrendering before Bharat and acknowledging the fact that without his help their plans won't succeed.

And what about Bharat; was he ready to help the gods? Yes, surely he was—as we have already discovered earlier that on the second occasion when the gods appealed to him to help them, Bharat had decided to change his discourse after considering the fact that a huge responsibility has been cast upon his shoulders, and so it would be wise and prudent on his part to leave the final decision of what to do on Lord Ram, and accept whatever the Lord decides—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 266; (ii) Doha no. 293.

Why was Indra so doubtful about the success of his plans without taking Bharat into confidence? It is because he knew that Bharat was a great devotee of Lord Ram, and the Lord is famous for his habit of never going against the wishes of his devotee. Besides this, both Lord Ram and Bharat loved each other immensely, which Indra himself has acknowledged. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 294 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it.}

To add to gods' dismay, even Lord Ram as well as his guru sage Vasistha have publicly declared that they would go the way Bharat wants. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 258 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes

it (sage Vasistha); and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 259; (iii) Doha no. 264 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it.}

²We have read a little while ago that Janak has had a meeting with Bharat where the king enquired from him what he wished to be done, and Bharat had told him that he is unable to give a decision in this matter. The best course would be to leave everything in the hands of Lord Ram and obey what he says. So, the whole assembly got up to go to meet Lord Ram. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 292—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 294.}

It is at this point that we have read how Indra and other gods had become nervous, and had sought the help of goddess Saraswati.

³While referring to Lord Ram, this phrase “rabikula dīpā” means that “the Lord was the glory of the race of kings descending from the ancient king Raghu of Ayodhya”; that “the illustrious family of king Raghu of Ayodhya had attained fame, and was glorified and honoured by having Lord Ram as its member”.

⁴Now begins the second conference between Lord Ram and Bharat. The first has been narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 257—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 270.]

समय समाज धरम अबिरोधा । बोले तब रघुबंस पुरोधा ॥ ३ ॥
जनक भरत संबादु सुनाई । भरत कहाउति कही सुहाई ॥ ४ ॥

samaya samāja dharama abirōdhā. bōlē taba raghubansa purōdhā. 3.
janaka bharata sambādu sunāī. bharata kahā'uti kahī suhāī. 4.

Then, after everyone had taken their seats, the chief priest of the family of king Raghu (i.e. the wise sage Vasistha) spoke with wisdom as he kept in mind the need of the hour and what was appropriate in the present circumstances, as well as by keeping in view what the people wanted, and what would be in conformity with the laws of Dharma (i.e. what would be right and proper to say and do on such occasions as this).
(3)

The sage recounted the conversation between king Janak and Bharat¹, and laid special emphasis on the words of wisdom that Bharat had prudently spoken on that occasion².
(4)

[Note—¹Sage Vasistha was narrating what transpired during the meeting between Janak and Bharat where he too was present—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 291—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 294.

²Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 293 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it.]

तात राम जस आयसु देहू । सो सबु करै मोर मत एहू ॥ ५ ॥

सुनि रघुनाथ जोरि जुग पानी । बोले सत्य सरल मृदु बानी ॥ ६ ॥

tāta rāma jasa āyasu dēhū. sō sabu karai mōra mata ēhū. 5.
suni raghunātha jōri juga pānī. bōlē satya sarala mṛdu bānī. 6.

After giving an account of that meeting, sage Vasistha told Lord Ram: ‘My dear (tāta)! It is my considered opinion that under the prevailing circumstances, whatever you instruct or order, it will be done by everyone.

[Oh Lord, all of us have come to a unanimous decision that everyone would obey whatever you order. So therefore, please don’t hesitate and say what you want to be done.]’¹ (5)

Hearing sage Vasistha, the Lord of the Raghus (i.e. Lord Ram), joined the palms of his hands in a prayerful mode and spoke words that were true, polite, and simple to understand (i.e. words that were straightforward, free from ambiguity, and spoken with sincerity and honesty). (6)

[Note—¹Sage Vasistha had made a similar assertion in his previous meeting—that it would be good for everyone to obey Lord Ram’s commands—when he was addressing an assembly called by him and attended by Bharat as well as all senior members of the community—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 253—to Doha no. 254.

That aside, after hearing what Bharat had to say to king Janak during the meeting the sage is referring to here, Vasistha had concluded that Bharat would only do that which would please Lord Ram, and this is clear from Bharat’s own declaration in that meeting—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 293.

Earlier we have read that Bharat had already made up his mind that it would be good for him to obey Lord Ram’s orders, instead of imposing his own will on the Lord—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 266.

Even king Janak acknowledges this fact that Bharat would never flout Lord Ram’s orders—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 289.

Hence, sage Vasistha, who being the chief priest of the family as well as a revered sage and a senior member of the assembly, one whose words were respected by everyone, decided to give his opinion that whatever Lord Ram orders would be acceptable to all. It was a sort of advice and a hint to the Lord that ultimately it is he who has to decide on the vexed issue.]

बिद्यमान आपुनि मिथिलेसू । मोर कहब सब भाँति भदेसू ॥ ७ ॥

राउर राय रजायसु होई । राउरि सपथ सही सिर सोई ॥ ८ ॥

bidyamāna āpuni mithilēsū. mōra kahaba saba bhām̐ti bhadēsū. 7.
rā'ura rāya rajāyasu hō'ī. rā'uri sapatha sahī sira sō'ī. 8.

[Lord Ram further said—] ‘When thy reverend self (i.e. sage Vasistha) and his majesty, the king of Mitihila (i.e. king Janak) are present in this august assembly, it

wouldst be highly impudent and absolutely improper for me to say anything and make any suggestion in the matter. (7)

Whatever you and the king order wouldst surely be accepted by everyone, and I say on oath that there is no doubt that it wouldst be accepted by me as well.¹ (8)

[Note—¹By now it is evident that no one is willing to take the responsibility of taking a firm stand and deciding once and for all what has to be done to resolve the vexed issue, because it is very sensitive in nature, and has a tremendous emotional quotient attached to it. Besides this, the gods are doing their best at fiddling with things and trying to upset the cart at a subtle and invisible plane to suit their own selfish motives; this attitude of theirs has made it tougher for the wise decision-makers to fix their minds on anything with certainty. Hence, everyone is deflecting the responsibility on someone else's shoulders—whether it is Bharat, Lord Ram, sage Vasistha or king Janak.

In the present context vis-à-vis Lord Ram telling sage Vasistha and king Janak to give a suitable regarding what has to be done, on the pretext of it being improper for him to say anything when they were themselves present in the assembly, inspite of the sage requesting the Lord to decide on the matter and give necessary instructions that would be accepted by everyone (apropos: Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 296)—we have read earlier too that the Lord has avoided taking any decision himself when he declared that he would like to do what Bharat wants, instead of suggesting any solution from his own side—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 259.

On another occasion a similar thing has happened when Lord Ram had approached sage Vasistha with a request to him to do something to find a solution to the logjam—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-6 that precedes Doha no. 290.

Hence, this is the third occasion when the Lord avoided making any personal suggestions or commitments in the matter that has defied a positive solution till this point of time.]

दो०. राम सपथ सुनि मुनि जनकु सकुचे सभा समेत ।
सकल बिलोकत भरत मुखु बनइ न ऊतरु देत ॥ २९६ ॥

dōhā.

rāma sapatha suni muni janaku sakucē sabhā samēta.
sakala bilōkata bharata mukhu bana'i na ūtaru dēta. 296.

Hearing the declaration made by Lord Ram under oath, everyone in the assembly, including sage Vasistha and king Janak, became bewildered, embarrassed and pensive¹.

Everyone's attention was then directed towards Bharat as they looked at his face in a quiet way of enquiry to see how he has reacted to what Lord Ram suggested, what his response was to the present situation, and what he has to say in the matter². (Doha no. 296)

[Note—¹The sage and the king became bewildered as they found themselves in a fix; they did not know how to respond to Lord Ram who has cast the responsibility of taking a final decision on the shoulders of both of them, jointly. Since this request came from the Lord himself, and since it was not denying the fact that they, sage Vasistha and king Janak, were the most senior and wise persons present on the occasion, persons who were in a position to take a decision and resolve complex issues by the virtue of their seniority and wisdom, a responsibility they weren't expected to shrug off, they became pensive and embarrassed, because they neither could say 'no', nor did they want to get involved in the matter directly as it pertained to a very personal and emotional relationship between two loving brothers, Lord Ram and Bharat.

They were flustered also because they were shying away from their responsibility and not conceding to the Lord's request to intercede and resolve the issue, something that was unimaginable under ordinary circumstances, and which reflected negatively on their own reputation. They became pensive because they could not decide what to do; whom to please and whom to displease. Their embarrassment was apparent in their silence.

The assembly was confounded as it had expected that both of them, i.e. sage Vasistha and king Janak, would now have an excellent chance, because Lord Ram has himself asked them to give an appropriate advice, to put forward the proposal that Lord Ram ought to return home and honour the wish of everyone. But as it turned out to the dismay of the assembly, the sage and the king kept silent.

This left no other option before the assembly but to fall back on Bharat and hope that he would once again reiterate the wish with which he had left Ayodhya in the first place, and would also be able to prevail upon Lord Ram to honour his wish. What was Bharat's wish when he left Ayodhya for Chitrakoot? Well, the answer is this: one, to ensure that Lord Ram returns home, and two, to symbolically crown him as the kingdom's next King in the forest itself. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 183; (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 187.}

²We will recollect that Bharat has already made his position clear during the first round of the conference that was held before the arrival of king Janak. He had made four proposals to Lord Ram, but ultimately left it on the Lord to decide the matter, declaring that whatever the Lord says will be accepted by him unconditionally—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 268—to Doha no. 269.

So, the members of the present gathering looked at Bharat to see how he responds now, and what he prefers to do, when neither Lord Ram, nor sage Vasistha or king Janak were willing to decide on anything lest their decision might hurt the feelings and emotions of Bharat.]

चौ०. सभा सकुच बस भरत निहारी । रामबंधु धरि धीरजु भारी ॥ १ ॥

कुसमउ देखि सनेहु सँभारा । बढ़त बिंधि जिमि घटज निवारा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sabhā sakuca basa bharata nihārī. rāmabandhu dhari dhīraju bhārī. 1.
kusama'u dēkhi sanēhu sambhārā. barhata bindhi jimi ghaṭaja nivārā. 2.

When Bharat observed that the assembly is feeling very anxious and getting nervous, and has turned to him to steer the course of discussion in the correct direction, he exhibited exemplary self-restraint and exercised great control over his emotions so that he would not be swept away off his feet by the latter¹. (1)

A huge wave of love and affection surged through Bharat's inner being, but he wisely reined it in considering that the prevailing situation was not conducive to yielding to such emotions in the same way as sage Agastya had prevented Mt. Vindiyachal from rising in height². (2)

[Note—¹Bharat realized that the ball was once again in his own court. No one was willing to take a stand himself, including sage Vasistha, king Janak, Lord Ram, as well as senior sages such as Vishwamitra, and all other senior advisors present in the assembly.

In a way, it was a great honour for Bharat that all the seniors have turned to him to solve the vexed issue though all of them had the competence and the wisdom and the intelligence to do it themselves. In a sense, Bharat became the final authority on the issue at hand—for whatever he would advice would be acceptable to all, including Lord Ram. This latter fact is very clear when we read what the Lord has himself declared in the first round of the conference held earlier, as narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 259.

So naturally Bharat was overjoyed and became highly emotional by way of a silent 'thank you', saying quietly 'I am grateful for the honour thou hast bestowed upon my humble self'. He was filled with affection for everyone for bestowing such honour to him. But the situation was very grave and the matter under discussion was very serious as it would have long term consequences, hence it could not be taken as a joke. Hence, being wise, intelligent and prudent, Bharat decided to exercise self-control over his emotions and act with prudence by preventing his feeling to get the better of him and impel him to commit some mistake. To wit, Bharat suppressed his emotions and prevented them from getting out of control.

²The story of sage Agastya stopping Mt. Vindiyachal from rising too high in the sky is narrated in the Mahabharat, Vanaparva, Chapter 104. Briefly it as follows:

The Sun-God, who goes around Mt. Sumeru, the golden mountain, daily, was once asked by the patron deity of Mt. Vindiyachal to go around this mountain as well. The Sun-God, however, declined, saying that his course or path through the heavens (sky) has been determined by the Creator, and hence he has no authority to violate it by going around some other mountain. This annoyed the deity of Mt. Vindiyachal who decided to raise the mountain to such an height that it would stand in the way of the Sun-God's course through the firmament, thereby obstructing his path and preventing him from circling Mt. Sumeru.

The gods residing on Mt. Sumeru were alarmed and flummoxed at this sudden and extraordinary development. They approached the mighty sage Agastya and sought his help to restrain Mt. Vindiyachal from getting higher and obstructing the path of the Sun. The sage devised a stratagem and went to the Mt. Vindiyachal, and asked its deity to give him way so that he can move on towards the south direction from the northern plains. The deity representing Mt. Vindiyachal prostrated before the

revered sage to pay respects to him, and allowed him to cross over its body (i.e. the mountain) to the other side. The sage went to the other side but asked the deity keep the mountain thus prostrated (i.e. lie low) till the time the sage came back from his mission. The deity had to obey the sage. However, the sage never returned that way, and hence Mt. Vindiyachal kept on lying low ever since that time. In this way, the wise sage had successfully prevented Mt. Vindiyachal from rising heavenwards and obstructing the path of the Sun.]

सोक कनकलोचन मति छोनी । हरी बिमल गुन गन जगजोनी ॥ ३ ॥
भरत बिबेक बराहँ बिसाला । अनायास उधरी तेहि काला ॥ ४ ॥

sōka kanakalōcana mati chōnī. harī bimala guna gana jagajōnī. 3.
bharata bibēka barāham̐ bisālā. anāyāsa udharī tēhi kālā. 4.

The bewilderment and perplexities that clouded everyone's wisdom and filled their mind with doubts and confusions were like the demon 'Hiranyaksha' (referred to here as "kanakalōcana") who had stolen the 'earth' (referred to here as "jagajōnī") and hidden it (in the nether world, which had a grave consequence as it completely stopped the process of creation and its sustenance on earth, thereby interfering with the cycle of creation as ordained by the Supreme Being)¹. (3)

Just like the case at that time when Lord Vishnu had manifested himself as Lord Varaaha (the legendary Boar)² and liberated the earth and provided freedom from vexation to its bewildered creatures, Bharat too played a similar virtuous and noble role now by using his wisdom, intelligence and wit to speak wisely and prudently so that the confusion, bewilderment, anxiety and uncertainty that had confounded the mind of everyone were dispelled, and peace and stability returned to them³. (4)

[Note—¹Earth is called "jagajōnī" because it harbours life in its womb; the earth fosters life on it and provides all things necessary to sustain it. The word "jagajōnī" has two parts, viz. world (jaga) + womb (jōnī).

Similarly, the demon Hiranyaksha' is referred to here as "kanakalōcana" because the word "kanakalōcana" means 'one with a golden eye {gold = kanaka; eye = lōcana) which is also the literal meaning of the demon's name. Gold = Hiranya; eye = Aksha.

²This story is narrated in Srimad Bhagwat Mahapuran, Book III, Chapter 13, 18 and 19. In brief it is as follows:

In the beginning of creation, Lord Brahma, the creator, produced Manu and Satrupa, the first male and female. The couple asked the creator to tell them what they are expected to do, at which Brahma told them to start the process of procreation and spread their off-springs on the ground, thereby propagating the human race. Manu was left flummoxed as he did not see any land to carry out his mandate. It was because the demon Hiranyaaksha had hidden it under water of the celestial ocean (or in the void of the nether world ruled by the demons).

Finding no land to stand upon and start the process of procreation, Manu complained to Brahma; the latter meditated and discovered the reason for the earth's disappearance. Brahma then appealed to Lord Vishnu, the 'sustainer and protector of

this creation, and the second god of the Trinity'. Immediately, a Vishnu manifested himself as a tiny 'Boar', the size of a thumb, which grew in size to assume a phenomenal dimension. The Boar dug up the earth from where it was concealed, held it secure on its tusks and revealed it for Brahma.

Meanwhile, when the demon Hiranyaaksha came to know of it, he faced Lord Boar with his gigantic mace and challenged the latter for a duel. In the battle that followed, Lord Vishnu, disguised as a Boar, slayed the demon and finally set the earth free from his clutches.

An interesting development played out in the meantime. The rescued earth itself needed somewhere to be kept. It was like a huge 'ball'. So, the Boar placed it on the surface of the celestial ocean from underneath of which it was rescued, and by his mystical powers made it float on it like a buoy. This is why the land mass of the earth seems to be surrounded by water from all sides.

³This story is used as a metaphor here to say that just like the Boar ended the consternation and bewilderment that Manu and Brahma faced when earth was hidden by the demon Hinanyaaksha, Bharat too used his wisdom and prudent thinking to remove the consternation, anxiety, doubts and confusions that everyone in the assembly faced at that time, as a result of which peace and stability of mind returned to them all.]

करि प्रनामु सब कहँ कर जोरे । रामु राउ गुर साधु निहोरे ॥ ५ ॥

छमब आजु अति अनुचित मोरा । कहउँ बदन मृदु बचन कठोरा ॥ ६ ॥

kari pranāmu saba kham' kara jōrē. rāmu rā'u gura sādhu nihōrē. 5.
chamaba āju ati anucita mōrā. kaha'um' badana mṛdu bacana kaṭhōrā. 6.

Bharat bowed before the whole assembly, and joined the palms of his hands to pay especial reverence to Lord Ram, king Janak, his guru sage Vasistha and all other sages and pious persons present on the occasion. (5)

Then, Bharat said with all the humility he could muster: 'I beg forgiveness from all of you collectively because it is highly improper and very impudent for me to have the audacity to speak in front of this august assembly which is attended by so many learned, wise and illustrious personalities (but circumstances have forced me to speak though I would have preferred not to).

I also seek forgiveness because what I am about to say may sound harsh and not in conformity with the exterior of politeness that I might portray with my courteous behaviour and soft-spoken words (but then again I am compelled to speak my mind, for otherwise I would be virtually disobeying the orders of my elders who are present here who have silently hinted to me to speak out what I have in my mind and heart)¹. (6)

[Note—¹In this context, refer to Doha no. 296 herein above where we have read that everyone turned to Bharat and waited for his reaction. This clearly was a hint to Bharat to speak frankly and tell what is in his mind and heart, without fearing that his speaking would annoy anyone.

Though Bharat had a subtle permission to speak what he wants, and therefore he need not have been so hesitant or embarrassed to say anything before his seniors, yet this opening statement of his shows how nice, well-mannered, cultured and a decent person Bharat was. In fact, Bharat was an embodiment of the virtues of courteousness and good manners. His virtues, goodness and courteous nature had left sage Vasistha spellbound earlier—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 257.

Earlier, Lord Ram too had not minced any word to praise Bharat lavishly—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 231—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 232; (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 263—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 263.

Similarly, king Janak too had a very high opinion of Bharat as is evident in what he told his wife Sunayana in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 288—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 289.]

हियँ सुमिरी सारदा सुहाई । मानस तें मुख पंकज आई ॥ ७ ॥

बिमल बिबेक धरम नय साली । भरत भारती मंजु मराली ॥ ८ ॥

hiyam̐ sumirī sārādā suhā'ī. mānasa tēm mukha paṅkaja ā'ī. 7.
bimala bibēka dharama naya sālī. bharata bhāratī man̐ju marālī. 8.

Before saying anything further, Bharat invoked the blessings of goddess Sharda (i.e. goddess Saraswati, the patron deity of speech and wisdom)¹.

The goddess blessed him so that the purity and sincerity of his heart as well as the noble and pious intentions he had revealed themselves in wise words that he spoke. (7)

The words Bharat spoke were honest and showed the purity of his heart; they were spoken with wisdom and conformed to the principles of Dharma (righteousness, probity and propriety); they were spoken using polite and sweet words.

[Note—¹Bharat invoked goddess Saraswati to enable him, to empower him to speak wisely, coherently and in an intelligent manner so that he is able to put forward his case judiciously and comprehensively in a way that would be appreciated by everyone, without causing any offense to anyone, nor appearing to violate the principles of decorum and good manners, and at the same time would be in line with Lord Ram's wishes so that he is not subjected to any kind of pressure to say either 'yes' or 'no'.]

दो०. निरखि बिबेक बिलोचनन्हि सिथिल सनेहँ समाजु ।

करि प्रनामु बोले भरतु सुमिरि सीय रघुराजु ॥ २९७ ॥

dōhā.

nirakhi bibēka bilōcananhi sithila sanēham̐ samāju.
kari pranāmu bōlē bharatu sumiri sīya raghurāju. 297.

Bharat observed that the assembly was perplexed and benumbed due to emotions of affection that had caused a lot of bewilderment and anxiety to the people regarding the outcome of the meeting.

[The people were worried whether or not Lord Ram would return home; they were worried about what would happen to Bharat should Lord Ram refuse to oblige him; they were feeling so sad that they would have to return home empty-handed should the Lord decide to stay on in the forest and Bharat agrees to let him do so.]

Bharat bowed his head before everyone, and invoking Lord Ram's grace in his heart, he began to speak. (Doha no. 297)

चौ०. प्रभु पितु मातु सुहृद गुर स्वामी । पूज्य परम हित अंतरजामी ॥ १ ॥
 सरल सुसाहिबु सील निधानू । प्रनतपाल सर्वग्य सुजानू ॥ २ ॥
 समरथ सरनागत हितकारी । गुनगाहकु अवगुन अघ हारी ॥ ३ ॥
 स्वामि गोसाँइहि सरिस गोसाँई । मोहि समान में साँइ दोहाई ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

prabhu pitu mātu suhṛda gura svāmī. pūjya parama hita antarajāmī. 1.
 sarala susāhibu sīla nidhānū. pranatapāla sarbagya sujānū. 2.
 samaratha saranāgata hitakārī. gunagāhaku avaguna agha hārī. 3.
 svāmi gōsāmīhi sarisa gōsā'īm. mōhi samāna maim sā'im' dōhā'īm. 4.

Turning to Lord Ram, Bharat submitted: 'Oh my revered Lord (prabhu)! Thou art like my father (pitu), my mother (mātu), my most dear and fast friend (suhṛda), my guru (teacher and moral advisor—"gura"), my lord and master (svāmī), the one whom I revere the most (pūjya)¹ as I know that thou art my best well-wisher (parama hita)², as well as the one who knows what I have in my heart (antarajāmī)³.

[To wit, oh Lord, thou art the only relation that matters to me, and as far as I am concerned no other thing or no other person is of any consequence.] (1)

[Now, Bharat lists the glorious virtues of Lord Ram.] Lord, thou art simple-hearted and most kind (sarala); thou art a benevolent lord and master (susāhibu); thou art a treasury of courteousness, politeness and graciousness (sīla nidhānū); thou art a benefactor of all those who have bow and prostrate themselves before thee to seek thine blessings and help (pranatapāla)⁴; thou art all-knowing and omniscient (sarbagya); and it is universally known that thou art most gentlemanly by thine inherent nature (sarbagya sujānū)⁵. (2)

Verily, thou art able and competent in all respects (samaratha)⁶; thou art a well-wisher of those who come to seek refuge at thing holy feet and take good care of them (saranāgata hitakārī)⁷; thou wouldst acknowledge the goodness in a person and accept the latter for the good virtues that he has (gunagāhaku); and thou wouldst ensure that the evil qualities present in a person are got rid of, thereby freeing him from the taint of sins and their evil consequences (avaguna agha hārī). (3)

Oh my revered Lord (svāmī)! I can confidently vouchsafe in the name thy majesty (sā'im' dōhā'īm) that on the one hand thou art an embodiment of all the excellent

virtues and the best of characters one can imagine of, thereby making thee the only lord and master of thy kind (i.e. thou art incomparable with anyone else—“gōsām̐hi sarisa gōsā'īm”)⁸, and on the other hand I am unique inasmuch as I am most lowly and humble (that I have no comparison with anyone else in this respect—“mōhi samāna mair̐m sā'īm̐ dōhā'īm”)⁹. (4)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 77; (b) Ayodhya Kand, (ii) Doha no. 63; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 177.

²A similar idea has been expressed by sage Valmiki, albeit in a somewhat brief manner in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 130.

Refer also to: Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 119; (b) Uttar Kand, (ii) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 47; (iii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 124.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 66 (Laxman); (ii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 72; (iii) Doha no. 201 (Nishad to Bharat); (iv) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 211; (v) Doha no. 256; (vi) Doha no. 257; (vii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 266; (viii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 267; (b) Aranya Kand, (ix) Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 6 (sage Atri); (x) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 9 (all the sages when Lord Ram asked them about the heap of bones he saw along the road to the forest); (xi) Chaupai line no. 19 that precedes Doha no. 11 (sage Sutikshan); (xii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 39 (Lord Shiva to Uma, his consort); (xiii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 42; (c) Sundar Kand, (xiv) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 49 (Vibhishan); (d) Uttar Kand, (xv) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 36 (Lord Ram knows the inner thoughts of all living being).

⁴Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Sundar Kand, (i) Doha no. 22; (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 49; (b) Lanka Kand, (iii) Doha no. 20; (iv) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 102; (c) Uttar Kand, (v) Chanda line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 13; (vi) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 37.

⁵Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 8-11 that precede Doha no. 28.

⁶Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Doha no. 119-b; (ii) Doha no. 122-b.

⁷Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 44; (ii) Doha no. 45.

⁸Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 28; (b) Uttar Kand, (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 124.

⁹A similar idea is also expressed in Tulsidas' book of prayers known as 'Vinai Patrika', in its verse nos. 171; 258.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 130-a.]

प्रभु पितु बचन मोह बस पेली । आयउँ इहाँ समाजु सकेली ॥ ५ ॥
 जग भल पोच ऊँच अरु नीचू । अमिअ अमरपद माहरु मीचू ॥ ६ ॥
 राम रजाइ मेट मन माहीं । देखा सुना कतहुँ कोउ नाहीं ॥ ७ ॥
 सो मैं सब बिधि कीन्हि ढिठाई । प्रभु मानी सनेह सेवकाई ॥ ८ ॥

prabhu pitu bacana mōha basa pēlī. āya'um' ihām' samāju sakēlī. 5.
 jaga bhala pōca ūm'ca aru nīcū. ami'a amarapada māhuru mīcū. 6.
 rāma rajā'i mēṭa mana māhīm. dēkhā sunā katahum' kō'u nāhīm. 7.
 sō maim saba bidhi kīnhi ḍhiṭhā'ī. prabhu mānī sanēha sēvakā'ī. 8.

Oh Lord, I had been so much overcome by affection for you that I had lost my wisdom, and was so much driven by distress that I had overstepped prudence and probity by violating the words of our father (whereby you had to go to the forest and I was supposed to accept the crown) inasmuch as I gathered a crowd of people to come here (instead of obeying the father's words myself, and let you obey them too by remaining in the forest for the designated period of fourteen years). (5)

In this whole world, from the most wise and the exalted to the most lowly and ignorant, from the mortal beings to the immortal beings, --- (6)

--- No one has ever seen or heard anyone daring to disobey the commands of Lord Ram even in one's thoughts (i.e. even in one's dreams)¹. (7)

But I had been so distressed and driven by my emotions that I had the temerity to defy protocol and endeavour to try and press you to accept the crown and return home in violation of the father's words, yet oh Lord, you had been so gracious and kind that you had not taken umbrage at my impertinence, and instead you have shown compassion and understanding towards me by realizing that I have done what I did because I wanted to serve you². (8)

[Note—¹Bharat refers to what Lord Ram had told Kaikeyi and king Dasrath, as well as Kaushalya: that he would willingly go to the forest as ordered by his father, and Bharat would get the crown as also ordered by him. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 41—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 42 (Kaikeyi); (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 45—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 46 (Dasrath); (iii) Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 53 (Kaushalya).}

The fact that no one can dare to disobey Lord Ram has been affirmed by sage Vasistha too in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 254 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it.

²Refer also to Bharat's declaration in this respect which he made during the meeting held in Ayodhya when he was advised by everyone, including sage Vasistha and mother Kaushalya as well as the chief minister of the kingdom, to accept the crown, as narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 178.

Bharat had also declared that he is confident that though he is a sinner inasmuch as it is due to him that Lord Ram was made to go to the forest and suffer hardships, yet the Lord would surely forgive him when he realizes how much Bharat loves him, and that he was ignorant of the dirty scheme his mother had hatched. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 183 along with Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede it.}

We have also read that on the way to Chitrakoot, it often happened that Bharat felt his legs refused to move forward because he was in doubt regarding how Lord Ram would receive him, yet when he remembered the gracious and kind nature of the Lord he felt confident that the Lord would forgive him, which helped him regain his energy and move forward with enthusiasm. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 233—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 234.}]

दो०. कृपाँ भलाई आपनी नाथ कीन्ह भल मोर ।

दूषन भे भूषन सरिस सुजसु चारु चहु ओर ॥ २९८ ॥

dōhā.

krpām̐ bhalā'īm āpanī nātha kīnha bhala mōra.

dūṣana bhē bhūṣana sarisa sujasu cāru cahu ōra. 298.

‘Oh Lord (nātha)! Thou hast done so much good to me by being so kind, merciful, compassionate and gracious upon me that by thy grace and benevolence my many faults and multiple shortcomings have been forgotten by all, and instead of infamy and ignominy that otherwise I was sure to have, I have been bestowed with immense good fame and reputation that has made me a like a jewel in the world.’ (Doha no. 298)

[Note—Bharat is thanking Lord Ram for showing so much understanding and compassion for him. Earlier he had a fear lurking in his heart—that if Lord Ram decides not to receive him and forgive him for the evil doings of his mother Kaikeyi, there was no hope left for Bharat to ever clean his name before the world. History and the coming generations would always treat him as a villain and a rascal who betrayed the trust and love his elder brother had for him by backstabbing him and conspiring against him to surreptitiously grab the crown. The world would have called Bharat evil, vile, hateful and selfish, someone who would be loathed and denounced for all times to come.

But Lord Ram warmly welcoming him and lavishly praising him before everyone turned the tide in favour of Bharat. What was a doomed fate for him suddenly turned to be his honour—because the world would now remember him with reverence and honour him as one of the greatest devotees of the Lord, someone who was truly loyal and faithful to Lord Ram. By his conduct, Bharat had set an example for others what true Dharma is, for by voluntarily denying the crown he showed the world that one must not overstep the principles of probity and propriety out of selfishness or greed. His courteousness and good manners, his virtues and exemplary character, would be remembered for all times to come.

All this was made possible because Lord Ram had warmly received him and reciprocated his affection. Had the Lord shown even a trace of anger or annoyance at

Bharat, then no matter how much he had advocated his innocence or integrity, no one would have believed him.

The lesson that is learnt here is that if a true Bhakta, a devotee of the Lord God, confesses his sins and comes to the Lord to surrender and ask for forgiveness, the Lord is so merciful, compassionate and forgiving that he immediately accepts him unconditionally.

In the verses that follow herein below, Bharat reiterates this virtue of Lord Ram.]

चौ०. राउरि रीति सुबानि बड़ाई । जगत बिदित निगमागम गाई ॥ १ ॥
 कूर कुटिल खल कुमति कलंकी । नीच निसील निरीस निसंकी ॥ २ ॥
 तेउ सुनि सरन सामुहें आए । सकृत प्रनामु किहें अपनाए ॥ ३ ॥
 देखि दोष कबहुँ न उर आने । सुनि गुन साधु समाज बखाने ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

rā'uri rīti subāni barāī. jagata bidita nigamāgama gāī. 1.
 kūra kuṭila khala kumati kalaṅkī. nīca nisīla nirīsa nisaṅkī. 2.
 tē'u suni sarana sāmuhēm ā'ē. sakṛta pranāmu kihēm apanā'ē. 3.
 dēkhi dōṣa kabahum'na ura ānē. suni guna sādhu samāja bakhānē. 4.

Bharat told Lord Ram: 'Oh Lord! Your majesty's noble principles, your noble attitude and your greatness are well established in this world, and they have also been extolled by the Vedas (ancient scriptures). (1)

Even those who are evil and vile by all means, such as those who are cruel, wicked, pervert, wild, unscrupulous, of an evil mind, immoral and censured by the world, impudent, lacking good characters, non-believers, and reckless to the extent that they don't fear for their own doomed destiny, --- (2)

--- If such wild and wicked persons come to you to surrender and seek refuge at your august feet, and if they bow before you (asking for mercy and forgiveness), then surely and certainly you forgive them; you accept them cheerfully and unconditionally. (3)

Inspite of seeing (knowing; being aware of) the faults of such people who have come to surrender before you and seek refuge with you, you have never paid attention to their follies and shortcomings.¹ (4)

[Note—¹This same idea is expressed by Lord Ram while welcoming Vibhishan, the brother of Ravana, the demon king of Lanka, as narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 43; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 48.

Refer also to Tulsidas' Book of Wisdom, known as "Dohawali", verse no. 47.

To wit, the Lord is so graceful that he just neglects the faults of his devotees if they come to seek mercy and forgiveness from him. The Lord knows that no person is immune to faults, and what is important is to realize one's faults and repent for them.

Even the most horrible of sinners and culprits are forgiven by the Lord when they come and submit themselves with humility and devotion before the Lord.]

को साहिब सेवकहि नेवाजी । आपु समाज साज सब साजी ॥ ५ ॥
निज करतूति न समुझिअ सपनें । सेवक सकुच सोचु उर अपनें ॥ ६ ॥

kō sāhiba sēvakahi nēvājī. āpu samāja sāja saba sājī. 5.
nija karatūti na samujhi'a sapanēm. sēvaka sakuca sōcu ura apanēm. 6.

Say, which other Lord or Master is so gracious, benevolent and considerate that he would himself devise a device and arrange things subtly in such a way that his servant is absolved of all accusations of wrong doings and evil conduct, and instead is bestowed with praise and gets applauded for good conduct and virtues¹. (5)

You are so graceful, benevolent and great a Lord that you never think, even in your dream, of what you have done for others (i.e. your devotees, servants and followers) in order to oblige them and help them in their needs, but instead you are always anxious to take care that your servants (sēvaka) are not subjected to any kind of difficulties or embarrassments they might face in this world.

[To wit, you are so noble-hearted and magnanimous by nature that you never think of the help and graciousness that you have shown to others, but on the other hand you always worry that your servants, devotees and followers are happy and contented, and are not suffering in any way whatsoever. This is your majesty's greatness that no other lord or master has.] (6)

[Note—¹In this context, please refer to Doha no. 298 and the note appended to it herein above.

Refer also to: (a) Vinai Patrika, verse nos. 42, 165, 214, 215; (b) Ram Charit Manas, (a) Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 16.

A sterling example of this nature of Lord Ram, that he feels obliged to his devotees and always feels that he has not sufficiently rewarded them for their service, or has not sufficiently reciprocated their affection for him, is the case of the boatman who had ferried Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman across river Ganges. After crossing the river, the Lord felt so obliged to him that he felt embarrassed he has not given the boatman anything in return as his ferrying charges. He offered the boatman Sita's finger-ring, which the kind boatman refused to take as he did not want anything in return from the Lord, knowing fully well that the Lord was attired as a hermit and had nothing valuable with him, and the finger-ring was a part of Sita's bridal ornaments, and it would be a high sin to deprive her of it. But nevertheless, Lord Ram felt so highly obliged to the boatman that he granted the latter the boon of Bhakti (devotion) that would bestow spiritual deliverance and an eternal life of beatitude to the boatman. This event is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 102 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it.

In the context of the present submission of Bharat, Chaupai no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 102 of the boatman's episode is of special significance as it says that "Lord Ram felt very hesitant that he has not given anything to the boatman for ferrying him across the river".

Another instance is when Vibhishan came to meet Lord Ram. The Lord wanted to reward him, and so he granted Vibhishan the kingdom of Lanka after it was freed from Ravana. The significance of this largesse is that though the Lord made Vibhishan the future king of Lanka, a grand gift in its own right, yet the Lord was hesitant that it was a small gift that he was giving to Vibhishan. This fact is absolutely clear in Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 49-b.]

सो गोसाइँ नहिं दूसर कोपी । भुजा उठाइ कहउँ पन रोपी ॥ ७ ॥
पसु नाचत सुक पाठ प्रबीना । गुन गति नट पाठक आधीना ॥ ८ ॥

sō gōsā'im̐ nahim̐ dūsara kōpī. bhujā uṭhā'i kaha'um̐ pana rōpī. 7.
pasu nācata suka pāṭha prabīnā. guna gati naṭa pāṭhaka ādhīnā. 8.

Verily indeed, I can raise my arms and declare unequivocally under a solemn oath that nowhere in this world one would ever find another Lord or Master with the aforementioned virtues that my dear Lord has.

[Put simply, it means that Lord Ram is unique, and is the only Lord of his like.] (7)

A pet animal dances according to the training he has got from its master, and a parrot would repeat what it has been taught by its master. The pet animal and the parrot are respectively praised for their skills, but the fact of the matter is that the real praise should go to their master who has trained them with so much effort and diligence that the otherwise useless creatures have been rendered worthy of honour and praise in the world¹. (8)

[Note—¹Bharat uses this metaphor to impress that whatever fame he has got for being righteous and a gentleman who has followed the principles of Dharma, is because of Lord Ram's grace and love for him. He has stressed this basic principle throughout the verses that precede the present one. Refer specially to Doha no. 298 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precede it herein above.

To wit, though the world applauds the pet animal (such as a monkey, a bear or a dog) for its dancing skills and the parrot for its recitation of some memorized lines, but the actual credit should go to their master who has trained them, likewise though the world applauds and honours the goodness of Bharat, yet the actual honour and the applause should go to Lord Ram who has made it possible to happen by praising Bharat himself and showing so much love and affection for him. Otherwise, the same world would have treated Bharat with great contempt and scorn just like the case of the treatment that is given to an untrained wild animal or a bird (parrot in this case) who nobody cares about.]

दो०. यों सुधारि सनमानि जन किए साधु सिरमोर ।
को कृपाल बिनु पालिहै बिरिदावलि बरजोर ॥ २९९ ॥

dōhā.

yōm̐ sudhāri sanamāni jana ki'ē sādhu siramōra.
kō krpāla binu pālihai biridāvali barajōra. 299.

In the same way as cited by me by the example of the pet animal and the parrot herein above oh Lord, you not only reform your servants (“jana”; i.e. devotees and followers) and improve their character, but you also show great respect to them yourself, which in turn enables them to be elevated to a high pedestal of respect and honour that is usually reserved for pious and saintly souls (ki'ē sādhu siramōra).

[To wit, you not only help your servants, devotees and followers to improve themselves by overcoming their shortcomings and faults, but you also show respect to them by overlooking their drawbacks, which in turn makes them worthy of respect and honour in this world.]

In all sooth and without gainsay, who else is so merciful, kind and gracious a Lord and Master as you are who would diligently maintain high standards in all matters like your majesty does?¹ (Doha no. 299)

[Note—¹A similar idea is expressed by Hanuman when he first meets Lord Ram—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Doha no. 3 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it.

Another instance is in the context of Vibhishan, the brother of the demon king Ravana, meeting Lord Ram as narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 2-5 that precede Doha no. 44; (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 46—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 47.]

चौ०. सोक सनेहँ कि बाल सुभाएँ । आयउँ लाइ रजायसु बाएँ ॥ १ ॥
तबहुँ कृपाल हेरि निज ओरा । सबहि भाँति भल मानेउ मोरा ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

sōka sanēham̐ ki bāla subhā'ēm̐. āya'um̐ lā'i rajāyasu bā'ēm̐. 1.
tabahum̐ krpāla hēri nija ōrā. sabahi bhām̐ti bhala mānē'u mōrā. 2.

Driven by grief, affection for you, or simply due to my childishness, I have defied your orders (to accept the crown)¹ and had the audacity to come here without your permission. (1)

Oh merciful, compassionate and kind Lord (krpāla), yet when you saw me standing before you, you had forgotten all my shortcomings and failures (as well as the mischief that was caused in my name), and instead you had been gracious and done so much good to me in all possible ways.

[To wit, oh Lord, you had warmly welcomed and embraced me most lovingly in spite of me being the cause of your sufferings²; you have declared that you would honour my wishes³ in spite of the fact that it would compel you to go against the word of honour that you had given to the father, that you will stay in the forest for the next fourteen years⁴, because if you do what I wish you to do, then obviously you would have to accept the crown in the forest itself⁵ and return home to Ayodhya⁶. You had not bothered about your own reputation and what the world would say of you for breaking the father's words, but you have preferred instead to oblige me and keep my

wish supreme. Is it not a unique and a rarest of rare honour that you have shown to me? Truly, oh my revered Lord, what more would I want?^{7]} (2)

[Note—¹Lord Ram had said— at the time when he came to know that his father had given a word of honour to his step-mother Kaikeyi that the Lord would go to the forest for fourteen years and Bharat would get the crown in his stead— that he (Lord Ram) would be very happy to see Bharat being anointed as the king right away, that very day, and before the Lord departs for the forest—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 42.

So therefore, Bharat's observation that he had defied Lord Ram's instructions regarding accepting the crown is correct.

But why did he do it? He answers it himself: it was due to 'overwhelming grief of separation from Lord Ram, and the immensity of his regret that he was the cause for the Lord being subjected to so much suffering and hardships in the forest *1' and 'affection for Lord Ram*2' that compelled Bharat to come to meet the Lord in the forest, and then ask the Lord to forgive him for being the cause of all the sufferings that the Lord has had to endure in the forest, and at the same time try to persuade the Lord let himself be anointed as the king and return home. There are umpteen numbers of verses in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, that would make it apparent.

{Refer to for instance, *1 = (i) Doha no. 160; (ii) Doha no. 162; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 164; (iv) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 167—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 168; (v) Chaupai line no. 1 that precede Doha no. 178—to Doha no. 183; (vi) Doha no. 252; (vii) Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 262; *2 = (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 169; (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 268.}

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 240.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 259; (ii) Doha no. 264 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 41; (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 42; (iii) Doha no. 53 along with Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes it; and (iii) Doha no. 88.

⁵Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 187; (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 268.

⁶Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-2, 8 that precede Doha no. 183; (ii) Doha no. 268 along with Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it.

⁷Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 300 herein below.]

देखेउँ पाय सुमंगल मूला । जानेउँ स्वामि सहज अनुकूला ॥ ३ ॥
बड़ेँ समाज बिलोकेउँ भागू । बड़ीं चूक साहिब अनुरागू ॥ ४ ॥

dēkhē'um' pāya sumāṅgala mūlā. jānē'um' svāmi sahaja anukūlā. 3.
 baṛēm samāja bilōkē'um' bhāgū. baṛīm cūka sāhiba anurāgū. 4.

I have been so blessed and fortunate to see and submit myself at your holy feet that are embodiments of all sorts of auspiciousness and good fortunes, as well as to find that the Lord is favourably inclined towards me (and he has no ill-will against me).

[Initially I was very doubtful if you will accept me, for I feared you would scorn at me and even refuse to meet me¹. But somehow deep in my heart I had this feeling that the Lord loves me so much that he would never take umbrage of my faults and mistakes, but accept me². Luckily, my hunch proved correct³, and I was drowned in waves of joy and happiness to discover that I still occupied the same place in your heart that I enjoyed having since our childhood days⁴. So, I am thankful and grateful to you.] (3)

[Bharat expresses his gratitude to Lord Ram and thanks the Lord very much when he says:--] Further, all this honour was bestowed by thee upon me in the presence of such an august and honourable assembly as is present now⁵, and the contrast is all the more sharper when I consider that thou hast shown so much affection for me and have given me so much love in spite of my so many mistakes and shortcomings. (4)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 233—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 234.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 183; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 234; (iii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 260.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 241.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 260 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it.

⁵This conference was attended by all the senior members of two great kingdoms of the time—viz. Ayodhya and Janakpur. It was attended by king Janak and his ministers, by sages such as Vasistha and Vishwamitra*1, by ministers, courtiers and royal advisors of Ayodhya, along with Brahmins and elders of the societies of the two sides*2. Besides them, there were also present many sages, ascetics and other pious souls who lived around in the vicinity of Chitrakoot and used to come to meet Lord Ram frequently*3.

{Refer: Ram Charit Manas, *1 = Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 278 (sage Vishwamitra).

*2 = Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 253; (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 294.

*3 = Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 237 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it.}]

कृपा अनुग्रह अंगु अघाई । कीन्हि कृपानिधि सब अधिकारी ॥ ५ ॥

राखा मोर दुलार गोसाईं । अपनै सील सुभायँ भलाई ॥ ६ ॥

krpā anugrahu aṅgu aghā'ī. kīnhi krpānidhi saba adhikā'ī. 5.
rākhā mōra dulāra gōsā'īm. apanēm sīla subhāyam' bhalā'īm. 6.

Oh Lord who art a treasury of kindness and grace (krpānidhi), thou hast shown so much kindness, compassion and benevolence upon me, and that too to such a great extent that I did not deserve them. (5)

Thou art so amiable, noble, courteous and obliging by thine inherent nature that thou hast kept my honour and dignity above everything else by bestowing so much affection and love upon me. (6)

नाथ निपट मैं कीन्हि ढिठाई । स्वामि समाज सकोच बिहाई ॥ ७ ॥
अबिनय बिनय जथारुचि बानी । छमिहि देउ अति आरति जानी ॥ ८ ॥

nātha nipaṭa mairi kīnhi ḍhiṭhā'ī. svāmi samāja sakōca bihā'ī. 7.
abinaya binaya jathārucci bānī. chamihi dē'u ati ārati jānī. 8.

[Addressing Lord Ram, Bharat continues—] Whereas you have been so polite and courteous towards me, I, on the other hand, had shown impertinence by speaking so boldly and acting impudently by assuming that all my follies would be forgiven by you and the assembly, thereby undermining the dignity of this august assembly as well as your majesty's courteousness. (7)

Oh Lord (dē'u)! Considering that I am extremely distressed and overwhelmed with grief, I request thee to overlook my words, whether they are spoken politely or impolitely, and forgive me for whatever I say, as I am extremely upset and not in a proper frame of mind to speak coherently. (8)

दो०. सुहृद सुजान सुसाहिबहि बहुत कहब बड़ि खोरि ।
आयसु देइअ देव अब सबइ सुधारी मोरि ॥ ३०० ॥

dōhā.

suhṛda sujāna susāhibahi bahuta kahaba baḍi khōri.
āyasu dē'i'a dēva aba saba'i sudhārī mōri. 300.

It is too great a folly and highly impudent for me to speak too much before a Lord who is my best well-wisher, who is so exceptionally courteous and good natured, and who is so intelligent and wise as you are.

Therefore, oh my gracious Lord, whatever thou wouldst order me wouldst be accepted by me willingly, as it wouldst be for my best interest and serve my welfare the best.¹ (Doha no. 300)

[Note—¹A similar idea has been expressed by Bharat on other occasions too. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 266 (Bharat); (ii) Doha no. 269 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it (Bharat); (iii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 298 (Bharat); and (iv) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 307 (Bharat).

We have read earlier that guru sage Vasistha too had advised Bharat that to obey Lord Ram will be in the best interest of all—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 254 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it.

A true Bhakta, i.e. a true devotee of the Lord God, wants only one thing—and it is to have love and devotion for the Lord, and be able to serve him selflessly. His other wish is to obey the Lord's commandments as exemplified in the character of Bharat.]

चौ०. प्रभु पद पदुम पराग दोहाई । सत्य सुकृत सुख सीवँ सुहाई ॥ १ ॥
 सो करि कहउँ हिए अपने की । रुचि जागत सोवत सपने की ॥ २ ॥
 सहज सनेहँ स्वामि सेवकाई । स्वारथ छल फल चारि बिहाई ॥ ३ ॥
 अग्या सम न सुसाहिब सेवा । सो प्रसादु जन पावै देवा ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

prabhu pada paduma parāga dōhā'ī. satya sukr̥ta sukha sīvam' suhā'ī. 1.
 sō kari kaha'um'hi'ē apanē kī. ruci jāgata sōvata sapanē kī. 2.
 sahaja sanēham' svāmi sēvakā'ī. svāratha chala phala cāri bihā'ī. 3.
 agyā sama na susāhiba sēvā. sō prasādu jana pāvai dēvā. 4.

Bharat declared his commitment to the Lord when he affirmed: 'I swear by invoking the holiness of the dust of the lotus-like feet of Lord Ram, the dust that epitomizes the glorious and beautiful virtues of 'spiritual truth' (satya), 'spiritual merit and auspiciousness' (sukr̥ta), and 'true spiritual happiness and bliss'(sukha sīvam' suhā'ī) --- (1),

--- And I hereby declare the desire that I have in my heart, every moment of day and night, whether I am awake or asleep or dreaming, --- (2),

--- And it is to serve the Lord selflessly, lovingly and affectionately after abandoning all deceit and pretensions, and not expecting any of the four rewards that accrue to a person for meritorious deeds¹. (3)

Further, there is no better way to serve the Lord than to obey his commands. Oh Lord, now let me have this command from you, and it is sacrosanct for me. [To wit, please tell me what you want me to do, for your wish is my wish!]' (4)

[Note—¹To wit, Bharat says that he has only one aim is to have natural love and devotion for the Lord and be able to serve him without any selfish interest or goal, without expecting anything in return, such as the four legendary fruits or rewards that accrue to a person for leading an auspicious and meritorious life of goodness. Bharat declares that he wants nothing else.

The four legendary rewards or fruits mentioned herein above for all meritorious deeds done by a person in this world are the following: ‘Artha’—wealth and prosperity; ‘Kaam’—fulfillment of desires; ‘Dharma’—fame for goodness; and ‘Moksha’—liberation and deliverance of the soul.

The word “sīvam” means that which is true, that which is blissful, that which is beautiful, and that which is eternal. This word is usually applied to Lord Shiva as he epitomises these virtues.]

अस कहि प्रेम बिबस भए भारी । पुलक सरीर बिलोचन बारी ॥ ५ ॥

प्रभु पद कमल गहे अकुलाई । समउ सनेहु न सो कहि जाई ॥ ६ ॥

asa kahi prēma bibasa bha'e bhārī. pulaka sarīra bilōcana bārī. 5.

prabhu pada kamala gahē akulāī. sama'u sanēhu na sō kahi jāī. 6.

After having made his above submission, Bharat became so highly emotional that his body became thrilled and tears welled up in his eyes. (5)

Unable to restrain himself any longer, Bharat fell down agitatedly and clasped the lotus-like august feet of Lord Ram¹. The intensity of his love for the Lord and the depth of his emotions were such that they cannot be described in words². (6)

[Note—¹We read in Ram Charit Manas that there are other occasions also where a devotee has become so overwhelmed with emotions that he had become very agitated, and unable to restrain himself any further he has fallen down at the feet of Lord Ram and clasped them emotionally. One instance is that of the boatman*1, the other is of sage Sarbhanga*2, and another is that of Hanuman*3.

{Refer: *1 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 102.

*2 = Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 20-21 that precede Doha no. 10.

*3 = Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 3.}

²To wit, words have their own limits; there are situations for which they are totally inapt, for no matter how expert the narrator is, the only tool available to him to describe a situation and express his own thoughts on the subject is the medium of ‘words’, and due to their inherent limitations it is not possible for anyone to do justice to the virtues of love, affection, and their associated emotions by limiting their depth and immensity with the use of any kind of word. Emotions of love and affection have a transcendental reach, and they are such elements that cannot be butted and bounded by the use of artificial means, such as words, with their grossness and limited reach.]

कृपासिंधु सनमानि सुबानी । बैठाए समीप गहि पानी ॥ ७ ॥

भरत बिनय सुनि देखि सुभाऊ । सिथिल सनेहँ सभा रघुराऊ ॥ ८ ॥

krpāsindhu sanamāni subānī. baiṭhā'ē samīpa gahi pānī. 7.
bharata binaya suni dēkhi subhā'ū. sithila sanēham' sabhā raghurā'ū. 8.

Lord Ram, who is an ocean of grace, mercy, compassion and kindness (krpāsindhu), reciprocated Bharat's affection for him by speaking to him most sweetly and affectionately. The Lord lifted Bharat, and holding the latter by his hand, the Lord made him sit by his side. (7)

Hearing Bharat's polite submission, seeing his disposition, and observing his excellent virtues and character, Lord Ram was so intensely affected that he himself became overwhelmed with affection for Bharat so much so that he was numbed by the attendant emotions (and rendered speechless). (8)

छं०. रघुराउ सिथिल सनेहँ साधु समाज मुनि मिथिला धनी । १ ।
मन महुँ सराहत भरत भायप भगति की महिमा घनी ॥ २ ॥
भरतहि प्रसंसत बिबुध बरषत सुमन मानस मलिन से । ३ ।
तुलसी बिकल सब लोग सुनि सकुचे निसागम नलिन से ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

raghurā'u sithila sanēham' sādhu samāja muni mithilā dhanī. 1.
mana mahum' sarāhata bharata bhāyapa bhagati kī mahimā ghanī. 2.
bharatahi prasansata bibudha barāṣata sumana mānasa malina sē. 3.
tulasī bikala saba lōga suni sakucē nisāgama nalina sē. 4.

Everyone present in that august assembly, such as Lord Ram, sages and saintly people (like Vasistha, Vishwamitra and others), king Janak, and other notable members of the congregation—all of them were immensely affected (by Bharat's submission and his disposition) so much so that they became numbed by emotions themselves (like Bharat was). (Chanda line no. 1)

All the attendees praised Bharat in their hearts, and they lauded the sincerity, the immensity and the depth of his brotherly love and affection for Lord Ram. (Chanda line no. 2)

Meanwhile, though the gods had been weary of Bharat and had gloomy thoughts for him a while ago, yet they could not restrain themselves from showering flowers on him (because Bharat's goodness had overwhelmed them too, and since the gods are by their basic nature representatives of nice and auspicious virtues, so Bharat's character resonated well with them, and for the time being they forgot about their fears and apprehensions vis-à-vis Bharat, and instead decided to show their appreciation and support for him by means of showering flowers over him)¹. (Chanda line no. 3)

Tulsidas says that when the people who were attending the assembly heard Bharat's words (wherein he had told Lord Ram that whatever the Lord orders would be accepted by him)², all of them were dismayed and became distraught³, just like the case of the lotus flower that becomes depressed and gloomy when night approaches

(because during the night it closes its petals, a symbolic way of expression of its unhappiness and depression). (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹This is not the first time the gods have showered flowers on Bharat; they had done it earlier too in spite of their apprehension of Bharat—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 220.

²Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 300 herein above.

³We have read that a similar situation had arisen earlier too when during the first round of the conference held before the arrival of king Janak, Bharat had declared that he would leave the final decision on what to do on Lord Ram, and would obey the Lord's decision—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 269 along with Chaupai line no. 2 that follows it.

Why were the citizens so dismayed and felt distraught? It is because since Bharat has left the decision on Lord Ram, it is quite certain that the Lord would declare his intention to remain in the forest to fulfill his father's words, and ask Bharat to return home and accept the crown also to fulfill the father's words. In this scenario, all hopes of the citizens—that the Lord would return home and get anointed on the throne of the kingdom so that they can happily live under him as their kind and loving ruler, something they had very dearly wanted and longed for—would be dashed to the ground and crushed.]

सो०. देखि दुखारी दीन दुहु समाज नर नारि सब ।

मघवा महा मलीन मुए मारि मंगल चाहत ॥ ३०१ ॥

sōraṭhā.

dēkhi dukhārī dīna duhu samāja nara nāri saba.

maghavā mahā malīna mu'ē mārī maṅgala cahata. 301.

It is such an irony that Indra, the king of the gods, wished that something good and auspicious would accrue to him even though he saw that everyone in the assembly, the males and the female citizens, was sad and despondent! (Sortha no. 301)

[Note—The gods are expected to be benevolent and merciful ones who would help those in distress and need; they are supposed to be kind and virtuous ones who are never expected to enjoy seeing others suffering, especially because of them.

The irony in this case is that Indra felt happy that Bharat has left the decision on Lord Ram, as it bids well for the gods because Lord Ram would not fail to fulfill his words given to the gods that he would personally eliminate the demons by going to the forest, though this means a lot of pain and grief for the citizens and Bharat.

But, by the way, why is it so; why is Indra happy while the citizens are dismayed? The answer is plain and simple—the gods are “selfish”. There are a number of verses in Ram Charit Manas that reiterate this view. Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 12; (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 220; (iii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 220; (iv) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 294; (v) Doha no. 295

along with Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes it; (b) Lanka Kand, (vi) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 110.]

चौ०. कपट कुचालि सीवँ सुरराजू । पर अकाज प्रिय आपन काजू ॥ १ ॥

काक समान पाकरिपु रीती । छली मलीन कतहुँ न प्रतीती ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kapaṭa kucāli sīvaṁ surarājū. para akāja priya āpana kājū. 1.
kāka samāna pākariṣu rītī. chālī malīna katahumṁ na pratītī. 2.

Stressing on the selfish and pervert and deplorable nature of Indra, the king of the gods, it is further said here that he epitomizes the evil nature of a villainous person who perpetrates deceit and conceit in order to satisfy one's own selfish interests, notwithstanding the suffering, hardships and pain such actions cause to others, for Indra has no compunctions in ruining the work of others and creating hindrance for them if it suits his own goals. (1)

Unfortunately indeed, the ways and natural habit (rītī) of Indra, who is the slayer of the demon called Paaka, his enemy (pākariṣu), is like a crow—with a wicked, deceitful and pretentious nature that is full of craft and maliciousness, one who would trust none and shows no mercy or compassion on others if it comes in the way of his own selfish goals¹. (2)

[Note—¹Indra was not at all concerned about the grief and sorrows everyone would be subjected to if Lord Ram does not return to Ayodhya and continues with his onward journey to the forest. His only concern was that the good and the welfare of the gods are taken care of, irrespective of everything else. These verses are full of scorn for Indra, and he is treated with contempt.]

प्रथम कुमत करि कपटु सँकेला । सो उचाटु सब केँ सिर मेला ॥ ३ ॥

सुरमायाँ सब लोग बिमोहे । राम प्रेम अतिसय न बिछोहे ॥ ४ ॥

prathama kumata kari kapaṭu saṁkēlā. sō ucāṭu saba kēṁ sira mēlā. 3.
suramāyāṁ saba lōga bimōhē. rāma prēma atisaya na bichōhē. 4.

Indra contrived a cunning device whereby a cloud of disillusionment and despondency descended on the citizens so much so that they started feeling restless and bored, losing all hopes of arriving at a positive a solution by way of Lord Ram agreeing to return home, which consequently made them tired and fed up from the hardships of life in the surroundings of a forest, leading them to become homesick and a longing to go back home¹. (3)

But inspite of the gods' overwhelming powers which they employed to delude the citizens and sow the seed of disillusionment amongst them as best as they could, yet the positive influence that Lord Ram's grace had on these unfortunate people was so soothing and comforting that they did not become unduly restless and completely lose

faith on their fate inasmuch as they loved Lord Ram so immensely that they were sure that whatever the Lord decides would be for their good and welfare in the long run².
(4)

[Note—¹A similar situation has been observed earlier too when Bharat had expressed his willingness to follow what Lord Ram tells him to do instead of insisting on the Lord to return home, and the gods had tried to play their dirty tricks. Refer to: in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 269 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that follow it.

It was again repeated at the time king Janak had tried to mediate in the issue—
apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 295.

²Although the citizens were temporarily so distressed by the developments that they lost hope and wanted to go home, yet they were sure that Lord Ram loved them and would surely take care of their interests in the long run by returning to Ayodhya and accepting the crown at the end of fourteen years during which he is compelled to live in the forest on the orders of his late father. To wit, the evil design of Indra and the gods had only a temporary effect on the people by way of deluding them and causing disillusionment to them, for their faith and trust in either Bharat or Lord Ram remained unaffected and as robust as it could possibly be.]

भय उचाट बस मन थिर नाहीं । छन बन रुचि छन सदन सोहाहीं ॥ ५ ॥
दुबिध मनोगति प्रजा दुखारी । सरित सिंधु संगम जनु बारी ॥ ६ ॥

bhaya ucāṭa basa mana thira nāhīm. chana bana ruci chana sadana sōhāhīm.
5.
dubidha manōgati prajā dukhārī. sarita sindhu saṅgama janu bārī. 6.

The effect of the gods' Maya (powers to create delusions) on the people was such that they became quite disillusioned and disenchanted by the prevailing logjam so much so that they their mind became fickle and wavering.

One moment they loved the forest and its beautiful natural surroundings, and at the other moment they became homesick and wished to return home.

[To wit, for a while they wanted to enjoy the natural beauty of the forest and hoped to live there longer, but soon they became bored and felt uneasy when they remembered the comforts of their homes and the prosperous city they lived in, making them homesick and igniting their longing to return home.] (5)

These dual and contradictory thoughts made the minds of the citizens tumultuous and restless just like the case of the water when the river and the ocean meet each other (because at this point, the water becomes exceedingly turbulent and agitated as it splashes, whirls, churns and heaves high due to the differential of pressure and diverse physical dynamics that exist between the river and the ocean as their two waters clash with each other in force). (6)

दुचित कतहुँ परितोषु न लहहीं । एक एक सन मरमु न कहहीं ॥ ७ ॥

लखि हियँ हँसि कह कृपानिधानू । सरिस स्वान मघवान जुबानू ॥ ८ ॥

ducita katahum^१ paritōṣu na lahaḥīm. ēka ēka sana maramu na kahahīm. 7.
lakhi hiyaṁ^१ haṁsi kaha kṛpānidhānū. sarisa svāna maghavāna jubānū. 8.

Because their minds were agitated and torn between two thoughts (viz. whether to stay in the forest longer to enjoy its pleasant surroundings, or to return home as life in the forest had its own hardships with which the citizens were unaccustomed), the people found no rest and peace at all.

But they kept to themselves and shied from sharing their feelings with others (for the fear of what others would think of them, and for being called fickle-minded, attached to physical comforts instead being devoted to Lord Ram, and for not trusting Lord Ram and Bharat). (7)

When Lord Ram, who was a treasury of the virtues of mercy, compassion and kindness (kṛpānidhānū), observed this piquant situation¹, he was amused and laughed internally as he muttered to himself: ‘Truly, there is no difference between the nature of a dog (svāna), Indra who is the patron deity of rains (maghavāna)¹, and a youth (jubānū)², for all of them act recklessly, are selfish, and impudent in their behaviour as they do not consider the consequences of their actions.’³ (8)

[Note—¹Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 125.

In this verse it is said that Indra is like a dog who snatches dry pieces of bones from a lion’s kill even as the latter looks on with amusement at the dog’s greed and impudence to steal stealthily.

Indra is the god who controls rains, hence the use of the word “maghavāna”—i.e. the patron deity of the rain-bearing clouds, for him.

²Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 124.

A youth is usually full of passion and driven by lust so much that he would not bother about the consequences of his amorous acts that would often cause lots of problems for him. Such a person is suspicious of everyone, and takes to his heels at the slightest hint of being caught in his outrageous acts.

In the aforementioned verse it is said that a passionate and lustful man driven by amorous thoughts become so scared of being caught in his act that he becomes as fidgety and suspicious as a crow who waits longingly to grab a piece of food as soon as it gets a chance, but during this time it feels so insecure about its own safety that it keeps on looking left and right in a fidgety manner to see if anyone is watching it, for at the first hint of danger it would fly away.

³Here we discover that even Lord Ram had great contempt for Indra, the king of gods. Worse still, Indra is compared to a ‘dog’! What worse could it be for Indra that even the Supreme Being has such a contemptuous view of him?]

दो०. भरतु जनकु मुनिजन सचिव साधु सचेत बिहाइ ।
लागि देवमाया सबहि जथाजोगु जनु पाइ ॥ ३०२ ॥

dōhā.

bharatu janaku munijana saciva sādhu sacēta bihā'i.
lāgi dēvamāyā sabahi jathājōgu janu pā'i. 302.

The deluding effect of Indra's powers could not influence Bharat, king Janak, the assembled sages and holy men, the ministers of the two kingdoms and other wise and intelligent persons in the assembly. But excepting them, the cloud of Maya (delusions) that the gods had spread affected everyone else according to the individual's susceptibility to it.

[To wit, those who were learned and wise were either not at all affected by this Maya or the least affected as they had a stable mind and knew the reality of things, while ordinary persons and those who were less enlightened had to bear the burnt of its negative effects.] (Doha no. 302)

चौ०. कृपासिंधु लखि लोग दुखारे । निज सनेहँ सुरपति छल भारे ॥ १ ॥
सभा राउ गुर महिसुर मंत्री । भरत भगति सब कै मति जंत्री ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

krpāsindhu lakhi lōga dukhārē. nija sanēham' surapati chala bhārē. 1.
sabhā rā'u gura mahisura mantrī. bharata bhagati saba kai mati jantrī. 2.

Lord Ram, who is like an ocean of the virtues of compassion, kindness, mercy and benevolence (krpāsindhu), sadly observed that the poor people were very distressed and sorrowful as they were suffering from a double whammy consisting of having affection for Lord Ram (which made them determined not to return home without the Lord), and the ruthless effect of Indra's cruel stratagem (that made them feel bored, despondent and homesick)¹. (1)

Everyone in the assembly, such as king Janak, gurus sage Vasistha and sage Vishwamitra, the elderly Brahmins, the ministers of the two kingdoms, and all others who were wise and intelligent, and were also deemed to be competent to find a solution, were, however, dumbfounded and confused, as if Bharat's magical charm had enchanted them so much as to have virtually locked their minds and block their intelligence, thereby rendering incapable of thinking out a way for the logjam that prevailed.

[To wit, though every one of them was competent to offer a solution to the vexed problem, but they were in a mental fix as no one wanted to say anything that would go against the wish of Bharat. Indeed it was a great dilemma that in an assembly where so many wise people were present, even a single person was unable to offer a solution for a simple and straightforward question. Again, they were unable to do so not because Indra or his gods could cast their notorious shadow of delusions upon them², but it was because they were all so moved by pity for Bharat that they did not want to see him saddened or offended in any way.] (2)

[Note—¹Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 302 herein above.

²Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 302 herein above.]

रामहि चितवत चित्र लिखे से । सकुचत बोलत बचन सिखे से ॥ ३ ॥
भरत प्रीति नति बिनय बड़ाई । सुनत सुखद बरनत कठिनाई ॥ ४ ॥

rāmahi citavata citra likhē sē. sakucata bōlata bacana sikhē sē. 3.
bharata prīti nati binaya baṛāī. sunata sukhada baranata kaṭhināī. 4.

Everyone in the assembly gazed at Lord Ram in a transfixed manner as if they were part of a portrait painted on a canvas¹. They weren't able to utter even a word as if a hypnotizing spell has made them speechless². (3)

Verily indeed, Bharat's excellent character marked by exemplary virtues that are integral to him, such as the depth and sincerity of affection and love that he had for Lord Ram, his willingness to observe established laws, regulations and traditions, his good conduct and pious thoughts, his politeness, amiability and courteousness—all such and other virtues were glorious to the extreme. They are all very pleasant to hear, but it is very difficult to list and describe them in their entirety³. (4)

[Note—¹A similar tense situation—when everyone in the assembly gazed transfixed at Lord Ram, not knowing what would happen next—is witnessed at the venue of the 'bow-breaking ceremony' at Janakpur when Lord Ram stood near the bow but had not touched it as yet—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 260.

²Earlier we have read that when Lord Ram asked king Janak to propose a solution to the vexed issue, the king himself became dumbfounded as he was not certain what to advice. At that time everyone turned one's attention to Bharat and looked at him with an expectation that he would offer some positive suggestion that could be implemented practically, and would also be in accordance with the principles of Dharma (proper conduct and ethics). {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 296.}

A similar situation prevails now, but this time the people attending the assembly look up to Lord Ram in the hope that he would give an advice that would be acceptable to all and make everyone happy. This idea is expressed clearly in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 257—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 258.

Though it is true that not everyone was affected by the deluding effects of Maya spread by Indra, the king of the gods*1, yet even those who had retained their wisdom and could think rationally preferred to keep silent as they weren't sure what Bharat actually wanted. Why is it so? It is because Bharat has taken two opposite stands: on the one hand he says that he wants Lord Ram to return home and accept the crown in the forest itself as Bharat has come prepared for it by bringing along all the necessary things needed for this ceremony*2, and on the other hand he says that he would not insist on anything but accept whatever Lord Ram orders*3. Besides this, all those who were wise and intelligent preferred to adopt a prudent stand by remaining neutral and non-committal, lest they would appear to be poking their noses uninvited in what essentially was a matter to be decided between two brothers. They also did

not wish to interfere in this case particularly because the all-powerful gods were out to create mischief and upturn the cart if things went against their wishes*4.

{Refer: Ram Charit Manas: *1 = Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 302.

*2 = Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 268—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 269.

*3 = Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 266; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 269.

*4 = Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 217 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 265; (iii) Doha no. 295 along with Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes it.}

³Regarding Bharat's glories, and excellence of his character and virtues, there are ample instances in Ram Charit Manas where he has been praised in lavish terms by everyone who came in contact with him. Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 205 (deity of Triveni); (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 210 (sage Bharadwaj); (iii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 222—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 223 (the ordinary country folk who saw Bharat while he was on his way to meet Lord Ram in the forest); (iv) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 231—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 232 (Lord Ram to Laxman); (v) Chaupai line nos. 2-5 that precede Doha no. 257 (sage Vasistha); and (vi) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 288—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 289 (king Janak).

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 326 along with Chaupai line nos. 3-8 and Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede it.]

जासु बिलोकि भगति लवलेसू । प्रेम मगन मुनिगन मिथिलेसू ॥ ५ ॥

महिमा तासु कहै किमि तुलसी । भगति सुभायँ सुमति हियँ हुलसी ॥ ६ ॥

rāmahi citavata citra likhē sē. sakucata bōlata bacana sikhē sē. 5.

bharata prīti nati binaya barāī. sunata sukhada baranata kaṭhināī. 6.

Bharat's "Bhakti" (devotion for Lord Ram) was of such a divine and pious nature that even a fraction of it that the sages (who were present on the occasion) and king Janak had observed was enough to make them overwhelmed with affection for him¹. (1)

Tulsidas (the poet-saint who penned Ram Charit Manas) says that this being the case (when even great souls such as sage Vasistha and king Janak had failed to measure Bharat's devotion for Lord Ram in its entirety), how is it ever possible for him (Tulsidas) to narrate Bharat's glories and virtues fully.

Yet Tulsidas says that at the same time it is also true that the mere remembrance of Bharat's excellent virtues makes him feel exhilarant in his heart as it ignites the glorious virtue of Bhakti in his own heart and encourages him to follow the example of Bharat (as an easy tool to please Lord Ram).

[To wit, Tulsidas says that remembering Bharat and his virtues helps him to keep the virtue of Bhakti fresh in his own heart, and at the same time it makes him feel confident that by following Bharat's example he would be able to please Lord Ram easily.]² (6)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 257; (ii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 258 (sage Vasistha); (iii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 288—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 289 (king Janak).

²Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 326 along with Chaupai line nos. 3-8 and Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede it.]

आपु छोटि महिमा बड़ि जानी । कबिकुल कानि मानि सकुचानी ॥ ७ ॥
कहि न सकति गुन रुचि अधिकाई । मति गति बाल बचन की नाई ॥ ८ ॥

āpu chōṭi mahimā baḍi jānī. kabikula kāni māni sakucānī. 7.
kahi na sakati guna ruci adhikāī. mati gati bāla bacana kī nāī. 8.

Emphasizing that Bharat's glories and virtues are beyond anybody's ability to measure, define, describe or enumerate in their entirety, Tulsidas says that they are so vast, innumerable and immeasurable, while the reach of the mind of a poet is so limited in its scope, that the community of wise poets and bards feel hesitant even to attempt to narrate even a fraction of Bharat's glories and virtues. (7)

Though the wise and expert poets and bards have a great desire to narrate Bharat's virtues and glories (as it would give them immense joy and satisfaction), yet they feel completely helpless and incompetent to do so.

The condition of these poets and bards can be compared to a child who wishes to say many things and express his views on many subjects that he comes across in the world, yet the poor child feels helpless because he cannot find words to fulfill his desire, nor is he competent enough to comprehend the magnitude, the dimension, the significance, the importance and the intricacies of things about which he wishes to say anything. [So, he would either keep quiet or make a joke of himself by saying incoherent things regarding subjects on which he has no understanding.] (8)

दो०. भरत बिमल जसु बिमल बिधु सुमति चकोरकुमारि ।
उदित बिमल जन हृदय नभ एकटक रही निहारि ॥ ३०३ ॥

dōhā.

bharata bimala jasu bimala bidhu sumati cakōrakumāri.
udita bimala jana hṛdaya nabha ēkaṭaka rahī nihāri. 303.

Bharat's glories and virtues are untarnished, radiant, adorable and charming like the brilliant disc of a full moon seen in a spotless sky symbolized by the pure heart of a devotee, while the mind of wise poet is like the female Chakor bird that is so enamoured of the moon that it keeps gazing, without blinking, at the latter as soon as it rises in the sky¹. (Doha no. 303)

[Note—¹In this metaphor, the glories and virtues of Bharat are compared to a full and brilliant moon that shines in the sky and looks most adorable in the heavens. The sky

here is symbolized by the heart of Lord Ram's devotees, where the virtue of Bhakti epitomized by Bharat shines like the full moon, while learned poets, represented by Tulsidas himself in this case, remain enchanted by observing the feeling of exhilaration and bliss that the devotee enjoys while remembering Bharat and his glorious virtues.]

चौ०. भरत सुभाउ न सुगम निगमहूँ । लघु मति चापलता कबि छमहूँ ॥ १ ॥
 कहत सुनत सति भाउ भरत को । सीय राम पद होइ न रत को ॥ २ ॥
 सुमिरत भरतहि प्रेमु राम को । जेहि न सुलभु तेहि सरिस बाम को ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

bharata subhā'u na sugama nigamahūṁ. laghu mati cāpalatā kabi
 chamahūṁ. 1.
 kahata sunata sati bhā'u bharata kō. sīya rāma pada hō'i na rata kō. 2.
 sumirata bharatahi prēmu rāma kō. jēhi na sulabhu tēhi sarisa bāma kō. 3.

It is not even possible for the Vedas (nigamahūṁ; i.e. ancient scriptures) to fully measure Bharat's virtues and glories in their entirety, so how can I, a humble poet with limited knowledge and understanding, be expected to narrate them?

Hence, I beg forgiveness from those who expect from me that I would say something more about Bharat's character and qualities, or throw more light on him, for I am incompetent to do so, and therefore unable to oblige them in this matter. (1)

Nevertheless, what I can vouchsafe with confidence is that by hearing and discussing the auspicious emotions of Bharat (sati bhā'u bharata kō) that revolved around his singular devotion, affection and love for Lord Ram, and which were the deciding factors for all his thoughts and actions, who would not develop such glorious virtues (of having devotion, affection and love for Lord Ram) himself; who would not become devoted to the holy feet of Lord Ram and Sita (sīya rāma pada hō'i na rata kō)¹? (2)

Verily indeed, in all sooth and without gainsay, even after remembering Bharat, and reading and hearing about the sort of purity of devotion, love and affection that he had for Lord Ram, if a person is not sufficiently inspired to follow his example and inculcate these virtues in himself, then without doubt there is no one more unfortunate and dumb than such a person. (3)

[Note—¹An exactly similar idea is expressed at the conclusion of this Chapter or Canto, which kind of summarizes the benefits of reading the episode of Bharat in 'Ayodhya Kand', because it marks the high point of devotion and auspicious virtues that would grant a person's soul unbound joy and grant him spiritual nearness with his Lord. {Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 326 along with Chaupai line nos. 3-8 and Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede it.}]

देखि दयाल दसा सबही की । राम सुजान जानि जन जी की ॥ ४ ॥

धरम धुरीन धीर नय नागर । सत्य सनेह सील सुख सागर ॥ ५ ॥

dēkhi dayāla dasā sabahī kī. rāma sujāna jāni jana jī kī. 4.

dharama dhurīna dhīra naya nāgara. satya sanēha sīla sukha sāgara. 5.

Meanwhile, Lord Ram, who is merciful and compassionate incarnate (dayāla), could understand the pitiful and distressed condition, both physical and emotional, of everyone; he was fully aware of what was going in the people's minds because the intelligent and wise Lord is able to perceive the inner thoughts and emotions of others who serve him, people who are his devotees, followers and subjects (jana)¹. (4)

Verily indeed, Lord Ram is a strident observer of the principles of Dharma and strives to uphold them (dharama dhurīna); he is patient, tolerant and resilient (dhīra); he is an expert in the laws and rules related to prudence, wisdom, justice and diplomacy (naya nāgara); he is an embodiment of the stellar virtues of truth, affection, courteousness and amiability (satya sanēha sīla); and he is an ocean of bliss, comfort and beatitude (for he has these virtues in abundance) (sukha sāgara).

[Note—¹This is because Lord Ram is “antarajāmī”: one who knows the innermost thoughts and feelings of others. There are umpteen numbers of verses in Ram Charit Manas that reiterate this fact—for instance, refer to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 66 (Laxman); (ii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 72; (iii) Doha no. 201 (Nishad to Bharat); (iv) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 211; (v) Doha no. 256; (vi) Doha no. 257; (vii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 266; (viii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 267; (ix) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 298; (b) Aranya Kand, (x) Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 6 (sage Atri); (xi) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 9 (all the sages when Lord Ram asked them about the heap of bones he saw along the road to the forest); (xii) Chaupai line no. 19 that precedes Doha no. 11 (sage Sutikshan); (xiii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 39 (Lord Shiva to Uma, his consort); (xiv) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 42; (c) Sundar Kand, (xv) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 49 (Vibhishan); (d) Uttar Kand, (xvi) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 36 (Lord Ram knows the inner thoughts of all living being).]

देसु कालु लखि समउ समाजू । नीति प्रीति पालक रघुराजू ॥ ६ ॥

बोले बचन बानि सरबसु से । हित परिनाम सुनत ससि रसु से ॥ ७ ॥

तात भरत तुम्ह धरम धुरीना । लोक बेद बिद प्रेम प्रबीना ॥ ८ ॥

dēsu kālu lakhi sama'u samājū. nīti prīti pālaka raghurājū. 6.

bōlē bacana bāni sarabasu sē. hita parināma sunata sasi rasu sē. 7.

tāta bharata tumha dharama dhurīnā. lōka bēda bida prēma prabīnā. 8.

Lord Ram, the Lord of the illustrious family of king Raghu of Ayodhya (raghurājū), carefully weighed the pros and the cons of the situation by taking into consideration the different aspects of it, such as the place, the time and the circumstances that

prevailed at that moment, as well the condition of the people who had gathered in his hermitage at that time, for the Lord always did justice to all while conforming to the principles of prudence and wisdom as well as keeping in mind the emotive quotient revolving around the virtues of affection and love the people had for him.

[To wit, Lord Ram acted patiently and judiciously and with due wisdom when dealing with any situation. He would take into account various factors that come into play before arriving at a decision. But more than anything else, he would always factor in the emotions and sentiments involved in a particular event before giving his judgment on it.] (6)

[The above stellar characteristics and glorious virtues of Lord Ram have been marked out herein above in the backdrop of what he was about to say now, for what the Lord would say and advice on the subject under discussion would be greatly influenced by these excellent qualities that are inherent to the Lord, qualities that are an inseparable part of his nature.]

Lord Ram then spoke politely; his words presented the best example of a highly eloquent, diplomatic and comforting speech (*bāni sarabasu sē*), for what the Lord said was meant for the good and happiness of the people in the long run (though temporarily they might not look to be in accordance with their short-term desires) (*hita parināma*).

Indeed, Lord Ram's words were nectarine in nature to hear, as they were sweet and soothing like the cool rays of the moonlight (*sunata sasi rasu sē*). (7)

Lord Ram spoke thus: 'Oh my dear Bharat (*tāta bharata*)! Indeed, thou art an expert in and a steadfast upholder of the principles of Dharma (righteousness, probity, propriety and ethics)¹.

Thou art as well an expert in the doctrines of righteous conduct as laid down in the Vedas (scriptures), as much as thou art in the traditions and customs of the society and the world, and the principles that govern the virtues of love and affection². (8)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 259; (ii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 288—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 289.

²Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 258 (sage Vasistha); (ii) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 289 (king Janak).]

दो०. करम बचन मानस बिमल तुम्ह समान तुम्ह तात ।

गुर समाज लघु बंधु गुन कुसमयँ किमि कहि जात ॥ ३०४ ॥

dōhā.

karama bacana mānasa bimala tumha samāna tumha tāta.

gura samāja laghu bandhu guna kusamayam̐ kimi kahi jāta. 304.

Addressing Bharat, Lord Ram continued: ‘Verily indeed I affirm that thou art pure and pious in thy deeds, in thy words, and in thy heart, making thee unique and one of thine only kind.

[To wit, whatever you do, whatever you say, whatever thoughts that occur to you in your mind, and whatever emotions that sprout in your heart—all are pure and refined; there is no trace of pretension, deceit or conceit in them.]

However, it wouldst not be proper to say much about the glorious virtues of a younger brother and laud him in the front of an august assembly attended by seniors and illustrious persons, especially when the time and circumstances are unfavourable and not conducive to such talk (as it would seem irrelevant and nothing short of an attempt to divert attention from the main issue by trying to pamper you so that you would be moved by flattery and agree to follow what I am about to advise. even though you know that no one else would like it). (Doha no. 304)

चौ०. जानहु तात तरनि कुल रीती । सत्यसंध पितु कीरति प्रीती ॥ १ ॥
 समउ समाजु लाज गुरजन की । उदासीन हित अनहित मन की ॥ २ ॥
 तुम्हहि बिदित सबही कर करमू । आपन मोर परम हित धरमू ॥ ३ ॥
 caupāī.

jānahu tāta tarani kula rītī. satyasandha pitu kīrati prītī. 1.
 sama'u samāju lāja gurajana kī. udāsīna hita anahita mana kī. 2.
 tumhahi bidita sabahī kara karamū. āpana mōra parama hita dharamū. 3.

Lord Ram continued to address Bharat affectionately: ‘My dear (tāta)! You are well acquainted with the honour of our family and its well-respected traditions coming down from ages.

You are also well aware of how our father was a strict adherent to the principles of Truth¹, as well as of his world-wide fame and reputation² as a compassionate and kind person who was righteous and noble. (1)

You are also aware of the current situation and the testing times we are passing through, as well as the general feeling and expectations of the society (people), the decorum and the protocols that are to be mandatorily observed in the presence of elders and the guru³.

Similarly, you know what would be liked by those who are dispassionate towards the world and are therefore neutral, as well as by those who are more concerned with the developments and their outcome due to their personal relationship with us, such as their being either our friends or our enemies⁴. (2)

You are well aware of everyone’s duties: what is the right thing to do, and what is not.

Similarly, you are also aware what would serve you well, and what would be good for me (i.e. you know what is best for us both), and how best we can observe the principles of Dharma together. (3)

[Note—¹Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 28.

²Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 173.

³Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 304.

⁴Lord Ram told Bharat: “My dear brother, listen. We have to be very diligent and careful in how we react to the prevailing situation, and what decisions we take. Remember that we have to keep in mind that though those who are dispassionate and neutral, such as hermits and enlightened sages, would not mind whatever is decided between us, as they remain detached from the world and its different reactions to any given situation, but on the other hand, we have to judiciously weigh the reactions of those who are either friendly towards us or are inimical to us. See, the reason is that those who are friendly with us would like this issue to be settled amicably and to the satisfaction of all so that our mutual love and affection are not affected, and peace and order is maintained in the society, whilst those who are inimical to us and envy our kingdom’s prosperity and fame, they would surely want that there is chaos and anarchy, and a deep chasm of mistrust, ill-will and jealousy is created between the members of our family and the society at large. Hence, we ought to be careful of these things.”]

मोहि सब भाँति भरोस तुम्हारा । तदपि कहउँ अवसर अनुसारा ॥ ४ ॥
तात तात बिनु बात हमारी । केवल गुरकुल कृपाँ सँभारी ॥ ५ ॥
नतरु प्रजा परिजन परिवारू । हमहि सहित सबु होत खुआरू ॥ ६ ॥

mōhi saba bhām̐ti bharōsa tumhārā. tadapi kaha'um̐ avasara anusārā. 4.
tāta tāta binu bāta hamārī. kēvala gurakula kṛpām̐ sam̐bhārī. 5.
nataru prajā parijana parivārū. hamahi sahita sabu hōta khu'ārū. 6.

I have full faith in you; I trust you completely (that you will take a correct decision keeping in mind all the aspects I have pointed out just now, and so I need not intervene in the matter and leave it on you to take a final decision in the matter).

However, compelled by circumstances, I am constrained to say something to you in accordance with the prevailing contingencies. (4)

My dear (tāta), in the absence of our father, it was only due to our family guru (sage Vasistha), who had graciously extended his good offices, moral support and a helping hand to us, that we could get over the crisis during extremely testing times. (5)

Otherwise, all of us, including the subjects of the kingdom, our relations (such as kith and kin, and all those with whom we have some or the other kind of dealings), as well as our family itself—all would have suffered immensely. (6)

जौं बिनु अवसर अथवँ दिनेसू । जग केहि कहहु न होइ कलेसू ॥ ७ ॥
तस उत्पातु तात बिधि कीन्हा । मुनि मिथिलेस राखि सबु लीन्हा ॥ ८ ॥

jaum̐ binu avasara athavam̐ dinēsū. jaga kēhi kahahu na hō'i kalēsū. 7.
tasa utapātu tāta bidhi kīnhā. muni mithilēsa rākhi sabu līnhā. 8.

Verily, it is like the case of the sun setting before its due time. Would this not cause unwanted calamity in the world; would not everyone in the world suffer if this ever happens?¹ (7)

My dear (tāta)! The malicious Creator (bidhi) has contrived a device that has caused a similar mischief for us (as illustrated by the alarming situation that would be caused if the sun suddenly changes its routine), but it was due to the grace and kind intervention of the sage (i.e. Vasistha) and the king of Mithila (i.e. king Janak) that the hopeless situation was tactfully tackled and brought around just in time from falling into a precipitous disaster². (8)

[Note—¹Lord Ram is referring to the misfortune of his being banished to the forest, and the almost simultaneous untimely death of his father, king Dasrath. To add to the woes of the kingdom, Bharat had refused to accept the crown. This left a void as there was no one to oversee the administrative affairs of the kingdom. Everyone was left in the lurch; everything was turned upside down all of a sudden. It was a situation reminiscent of some doomsday when the sun would suddenly decide to set at an odd time, creating chaos everywhere: the cycle of seasons and the turn of day-and-night would be thrown out of gear, resulting in mayhem and a calamity of gigantic proportions.

But the Lord says that in this situation, his wise guru, sage Vasistha, had played the role of a buoy and an anchor that helped to salvage a sinking ship and give stability to it.

²Lord Ram had praised the role of sage Vasistha in verse no. 5 herein above, but then he realized that king Janak was also present in the meeting, and he too was a very senior person, a well-wisher of the family as well as closely related to it due to matrimonial ties that existed between the two royal families of Ayodhya and Janakpur. It would not look good to omit Janak from praise in helping the family during crisis, so the Lord immediately made amends and praised king Janak too in this verse.]

दो०. राज काज सब लाज पति धरम धरनि धन धाम ।
गुर प्रभाउ पालिहि सबहि भल होइहि परिनाम ॥ ३०५ ॥
dōhā.

rāja kāja saba lāja pati dharama dharani dhana dhāma.
gura prabhā'u pālihi sabahi bhala hō'ihī parināma. 305.

[Lord Ram told Bharat—] ‘I assure you that every work relating to the administration of the affairs of the kingdom in a proper manner, all aspects of dignity and honour of the family and the kingdom, all manners of things that would have a bearing on the reputation and honour of everyone of us, all aspects of Dharma, prosperity and welfare of the kingdom and its subjects, of their wealth, homestead and livelihood—

everything would be taken good care of with the grace and blessings of our guru, sage Vasistha.

Everything would end happily and to the satisfaction of all. So, you need not worry at all on this count.

[You need not worry that if I am not there for a while to support and guide you, you will be left on the mercy of an already cruel Creator, because I assure you that sage Vasistha is there with you to act as your guardian and well-wisher, and he would ensure that everything is set right for you.]’ (Doha no. 305)

चौ०. सहित समाज तुम्हार हमारा । घर बन गुरु प्रसाद रखवारा ॥ १ ॥
मातु पिता गुरु स्वामि निदेसू । सकल धरम धरनीधर सेसू ॥ २ ॥
सो तुम्ह करहु करावहु मोहू । तात तरनिकुल पालक होहू ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

sahita samāja tumhāra hamārā. ghara bana gura prasāda rakhavārā. 1.
mātu pitā gura svāmi nidēsū. sakala dharama dharanīdhara sēsū. 2.
sō tumha karahu karāvahu mōhū. tāta taranikula pālaka hōhū. 3.

[Lord Ram continued to speak to Bharat most affectionately and politely—]

‘Our guru’s (i.e. sage Vasistha’s) grace and blessings protect everyone of us, you, me as well as all others in society, taking care of the good and welfare of all of us, whether we are in our homes (in Ayodhya) or we are in the forest. (1)

Verily, obeying one’s parents, one’s guru, and one’s lord and master is a highly auspicious and virtuous act that grants such mystical powers to a person that it enables him to easily hold the burden of the whole earth on his head effortlessly just like Lord Sheshnath does. (2)

So my dear (tāta), I prithee that you observe this principle yourself, and help me to observe it too, for by doing so you will be protecting the honour, dignity and reputation of our family (of which you are well aware)¹. (3)

[Note—¹By his opening statement, Lord Ram has clearly hinted to Bharat what he wants the latter to do: Lord Ram wants Bharat to obey what sage Vasistha had advised him earlier*1, and what their father, king Dasrath, had promised Bharat’s mother, which was equivalent to the father’s wish*2 which must be obeyed. Besides this, it was also Lord Ram’s wish that Bharat gets the crown in his absence*3. The Lord has also reminded Bharat that his fully aware of the great reputation and honour of their family*4, and he must respect it.

{Refer: Ram Charit Manas, *1 = Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 174—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 175.

*2 = Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 29; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 31.

*3 = Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 42.

*4 = Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 305 herein above.}

Lord Ram advises Bharat that it was to honour this wish of their father that he had himself come to the forest, and so it was also Bharat's moral duty to obey the wishes of the father (Dasrath) and the guru (sage Vasistha) to prove that he is really a sincere devotee of Lord Ram and loves the Lord beyond measure so much so that he would follow in the footsteps of the Lord, follow the Lord's example, and never do anything that puts the Lord in an embarrassing situation.

As we shall read shortly, Lord Ram would most lovingly and courteously prevail upon Bharat to fall in line by not being stubborn and persistent with his wishes that he had expressed during the first round of the conference earlier—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 268—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 269. It is because what Bharat wants to be done would violate the wishes of the father, king Dasrath, as well as sage Vasistha, their guru, and such a thing would certainly go against the principles of Dharma (probity, propriety, honourable conduct and moral duty).]

साधक एक सकल सिधि देनी । कीरति सुगति भूतिमय बेनी ॥ ४ ॥

सो बिचारि सहि संकटु भारी । करहु प्रजा परिवारु सुखारी ॥ ५ ॥

बाँटी बिपति सबहिं मोहि भाई । तुम्हहि अवधि भरि बड़ि कठिनाई ॥ ६ ॥

sādhaka ēka sakala sidhi dēnī. kīrati sugati bhūtimaya bēnī. 4.

sō bicāri sahi saṅkaṭu bhārī. karahu prajā parivāru sukhārī. 5.

bāmṭī bipati sabahim mōhi bhāī. tumhahi avadhi bhari baḍi kaṭhināī. 6.

By pursuing this single line of action, by observing this single discipline, many different types of auspicious goals¹ would be successfully achieved (without making any especial effort to attain them).

Verily, this single virtuous observance (of obeying the instructions of the father as well as the guru) would grant us manifold benefits just like a pilgrimage to a single place on earth, that is known as Triveni (where the three sacred rivers, i.e. Ganges, Yamuna and Saraswati, meet), grants a three-fold reward to the pilgrim (viz. purification, holiness and deliverance)¹. (4)

Keeping this thought in mind and giving due consideration to the facts (which I have outlined for you), I prithee to calmly and resolutely bear with the hardships and sufferings that have befallen upon us due the unfortunate circumstances, and be diligent in taking care of the welfare of the subjects of the kingdom and the family so that they are kept happy, protected, and well-provided for. (5)

My dear brother, let us all four brothers share our hardships and difficulties equally, and let us face adversities jointly. I do understand, nevertheless, that the period (of fourteen years) would be a hard time for you.

[I certainly empathise with you; I understand how sad you are and how difficult it would be for you to pass these long years. But my dear, days would fly by², and a little time spend coping with difficulties will grant all of us four brothers eternal fame and glory. So, enduring a bit of hardship is worth it.] (6)

[Note—¹To wit, just like bathing at one point where these three great rivers meet at Triveni grants the bather the combined reward of bathing in these rivers separately,

may, this reward is multiplied many times because of their cumulative effects, so likewise obeying one's parents and guru grants a person great honour and fame that he would otherwise get with difficulty.

²Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 62.]

जानि तुम्हहि मृदु कहउँ कठोरा । कुसमयँ तात न अनुचित मोरा ॥ ७ ॥
होहिं कुठायँ सुबन्धु सहाए । ओड़िअहिं हाथ असनिहु के घाए ॥ ८ ॥

jāni tumhahi mṛdu kaha'um' kaṭhōrā. kusamayam' tāta na anucita mōrā. 7.
hōhim kuṭhāyam' subandhu sahā'ē. ōḍiahim hātha asanihu kē ghā'ē. 8.

I also understand that you are of a tender heart, and of a very amiable and soft disposition, and in contrast therefore I appear to be harsh upon you.

But my dear (tāta), please don't mind me and don't take me otherwise, because the unfortunate circumstances and adverse time we are passing through at present has compelled me to say what I am saying.

[If I had a choice, be sure I wouldn't have been so harsh unto you as apparently I am forced to be now, for be equally sure that I love you very much, but my dear Bharat, I have no options left before me in the prevailing situation.] (7)

Verily, during bad times it is one's loyal and dear brother who would come to a person's help and stand by the latter. It is like the case of someone attacking another person with a sharp weapon when the hands of the person attacked extend automatically and instantaneously to defend him from the attacker.

[To wit, just like the case of a person's hands voluntarily standing up to protect him when attacked, a person's brothers who love him should volunteer themselves to help the person in times of his difficulties. So therefore, let us join our hands to get over this bad time and tide over the current difficulties, so that at the end when joy and happy times return, we can join it, and share our happiness and joy together.] (8)

दो०. सेवक कर पद नयन से मुख सो साहिबु होइ ।
तुलसी प्रीति कि रीति सुनि सुकबि सराहहिं सोइ ॥ ३०६ ॥
dōhā.

sēvaka kara pada nayana sē mukha sō sāhibu hō'i.
tulasī prīti ki rīti suni sukabi sarāhahim sō'i. 306.

'A servant ought to be like a person's hands, legs and eyes, while the master himself ought to be like the mouth of the body¹.'

Tulsidas says that this exemplary relationship that should exist between a master and his servant is so pure and divine and inspiring that all wise and learned poets and bards unanimously extol this virtue and lavishly praise it. (Doha no. 306)

[Note—¹Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 315.

Lord Ram cites the example of a person's body and says that the mouth is the only organ that the body employs to eat food which would provide nourishment to the whole body and sustain it, and this includes the hands, the legs and the ears. On the other hand, the hands, the legs and the eyes are like the different servants of the body that help it to arrange for food that the mouth would eat, and which eventually would provide sustenance to the organs of the body.

To wit, it's kind of a symbiotic relationship: one helping the other. The hands, legs and the eyes help the body to scout for food, prepare it and make it ready to be eaten, while the mouth enjoys the combined effort of these organs by way of eating the already prepared food. But the mouth is not selfish, because whatever it eats ultimately benefits the organs that have provided it with the joy of eating prepared meal—because the food eaten by the mouth provides nourishment and energy to these same organs, the hands, legs and the eyes that had given the mouth the luxury of eating prepared food without making any effort to either search for it and then cook it.

So, a good lord is like the 'mouth' inasmuch as whatever he gets is shared by him with his servants, and is used to provide for their welfare, happiness and comfort, just like the case of that everything eaten by the mouth is used for the welfare of the body and its different organs, including the hand, the leg and the eye.

We have read just a while ago, in verse nos. 5-6 that precede this Doha no. 306, where Lord Ram has advised Bharat to go back to Ayodhya and fulfill his duties of taking care of the kingdom and its subjects with utmost sincerity and diligence, as it would be right and the lawful thing for him to do, and it would grant him great fame and an immaculate reputation. In this background, the meaning of this Doha is very clear: the Lord further advises Bharat as to 'how to carry on his duties to govern the kingdom'.

To wit, Bharat ought to act like the 'mouth' of a person's body that serves two primary purposes—viz. one, it speaks on the behalf of other organs of a person's body, and two, whatever it eats it keeps nothing for itself, but transfers every morsel of food to the body for the sustenance of all the organs that depend for their nutrition on the food eaten by the mouth. The organs here are represented by the different departments of the state machinery, which are primarily of two broad categories—one that collect taxes and generate revenue, and the other which uses this revenue to serve the subjects of the kingdom. But since the king is at the helm of the affairs, it is his moral duty to see that this actually happens.

Therefore, Lord Ram advises Bharat to be selfless while ruling the kingdom, and whatever revenue is generated he should use it for the welfare and happiness of his subjects. Bharat should not become indolent and indulgent; he should shy away from wasting time and resources on enjoyment of worldly comforts and pleasures of the senses; he should not allow himself to become pervert and greedy; he should not be miserly when it comes to helping the citizens, but show magnanimity and benevolence while dealing with his subjects because he must realize that it is 'they' who are feeding him by way of paying taxes and supporting the structure of the state machinery by being loyal to the crown, and hence 'they' deserve their due share of respect.

Verily, a king is a 'king' only till the time his subjects are pleased with him and trust him, and he ceases to have a right to the crown if his subjects are unhappy with him, because he is merely a 'trustee' of a common fund of which all the subjects of the kingdom are the 'beneficiaries'.

This and such other subtle but noble ideas were meant to be conveyed by Lord Ram to Bharat in what the Lord tells him in this Doha.]

चौ०. सभा सकल सुनि रघुबर बानी । प्रेम पयोधि अमिअँ जनु सानी ॥ १ ॥

सिथिल समाज सनेह समाधी । देखि दसा चुप सारद साधी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sabhā sakala suni raghubara bānī. prēma payōdhi ami'am'janu sānī. 1.
sithila samāja sanēha samādhī. dēkhi dasā cupa sārada sādhi. 2.

When the assembly heard the words of Lord Ram, words that were soaked in the nectarine sweetness of the ambrosia that was produced at the time of churning of the ocean by the gods and the demons in search of the liquid of immortality (called Amrit), --- (1)

--- Everyone was mesmerized and sat transfixed even as they were all transported into a world of subtle blissfulness soaked with the nectar of love and affection (for Lord Ram) like the one enjoyed by a person in the higher stages of meditation, a transcendental state of existence called ‘Samadhi’ (“samādhī”: a spiritual state when the practitioner of meditation becomes motionless and loses all awareness of his surroundings as he soaks in the blissfulness experienced by God-realisation).

It was a silent state of extreme beatitude and felicity which goddess Saraswati (the patron goddess of speech and knowledge) failed to fathom, and hence being unable to describe it, she preferred to keep quiet herself.

[Further, she also did not wish to disturb this soothing environment of peace and bliss that the assembly was enjoying at that auspicious moment by trying to speak something and causing ripples in this tranquil ocean.] (2)

भरतहि भयउ परम संतोषू । सनमुख स्वामि बिमुख दुख दोषू ॥ ३ ॥

मुख प्रसन्न मन मिटा बिषादू । भा जनु गूँगेहि गिरा प्रसादू ॥ ४ ॥

bharatahi bhaya'u parama santōṣū. sanamukha svāmi bimukha dukha dōṣū.

3.

mukha prasanna mana miṭā biṣādū. bhā janu gūṁgēhi girā prasādū. 4.

Bharat felt an extreme sense of satisfaction. Being face-to-face with his revered and beloved Lord enabled him to forgo all sorts of grief, sorrows, miseries and turmoil that had been baffling him till then, as well as removing all circumstantial taints and scars that had been haunting his heart and mind (thereby rendering him tranquil and blissful). (3)

His face lit up with cheer, and all grief and distress of his ‘Mana’ (mind and heart) were eliminated, granting him the joy and exhilaration that is experienced by a dumb person if he suddenly gets the boon that grants his speech back to him¹. (4)

[Note—¹Bharat was exceedingly happy because now he has got specific instructions from Lord Ram which removed all doubts and dilemmas from his mind and heart. Now he was assured that if he governs the kingdom, it would be on the orders of Lord Ram; he would be doing it to obey the Lord's commands. Now the world won't say that Bharat had laid a conspiracy to send Lord Ram to the forest in order to grab the crown of the kingdom.

When Lord Ram spoke to him using sweet words that were soaked with love and affection for him, as well as the public display of warmth and love that the Lord showed for him, helped Bharat to overcome the greatest torment that he had been suffering from—viz. that the misdeeds of his mother, carried out without his consent, and which had sowed the seed of distrust between the brothers, thereby creating a wide chasm of hate and jealousy between them, was now a thing of the past, and that Lord Ram's love for him and the Lord's trust in him remained as robust and alive as it had always been. This particular point was the one that gave Bharat his greatest of joy; it provided him his greatest of comfort.

Finally, and for once and for all, Bharat was able to cure the pains of grief and sorrows that had afflicted his heart and made life hell for him for a long time; he was finally able to remove the remnants of any taint and scar that might have still lingered on to fan infamy for him even though he had gone to great lengths and had done his best to prove his innocence and establish integrity by the way he behaved from the very beginning. He finally was able to absolve himself of any notions of conspiracies and wrongdoings.]

कीन्ह सप्रेम प्रनामु बहोरी । बोले पानि पंकरुह जोरी ॥ ५ ॥

नाथ भयउ सुखु साथ गए को । लहेउँ लाहु जग जनमु भए को ॥ ६ ॥

kīnha saprēma pranāmu bahōrī. bōlē pāni paṅkaruha jōrī. 5.

nātha bhaya'u sukhu sātha ga'ē kō. lahē'um' lāhu jaga janamu bha'ē kō. 6.

Bharat once again bowed his head before Lord Ram, and joined the palms of his lotus-like hands to submit as follows: --- (5)

Bharat said: 'Oh Lord (nātha)! I have got the joy that is equivalent to me accompanying you in your journey¹. Verily indeed Lord, I feel I have got the full reward of taking birth in this world (because now onwards I will be serving you by default every moment of my life, and it is a privilege few can ever hope or expect to get). (6)

[Not—¹We have read previously that during the first round of the conference held earlier, Bharat had offered an option to Lord Ram—viz. that he wishes to volunteer himself to accompany the Lord on his journey to the forest*1. Then we read that Lord Ram told him to go back and take care of the kingdom instead*2. And finally we read that the Lord told him that all servants serve the master equally according to the duties assigned to each one of them by the master, when the Lord gives the example of a hand, leg and eye that serve the mouth by arranging food for it to eat, and the services carried out by these individual organs for the mouth in turn help to sustain the body of the person to which they all belong*3. This is like all the individuals of a society working together according to the duties assigned to each one of them in order to

serve the community as a whole. In this endeavour, they must help each other to jointly shoulder the burden and distribute the effort equally amongst themselves, so that the pain and the joy that come as a consequence are then shared equally by all in the spirit of a community*4.

{Refer: Ram Charit Manas, *1 = Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 268.

*2 = Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 306.

*3 = Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 306.

*4 = Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 306.}

To wit, Bharat realized to his joy that if he goes back home and faithfully carries out the orders of Lord Ram like a true servant does, then it would be equivalent to his accompanying the Lord to the forest because it was the Lord's warrant he was simply serving.

In this context, one recalls John Milton's famous poem written 'on his blindness' wherein he says—"God doth not need Either man's work, or His own gifts. Who best Bear His yoke, they serve Him best; His state Is kingly: thousands at His bidding speed, And post o'er land and ocean without rest; They also serve who only stand and wait".

True to his word, after Bharat returned to Ayodhya he put the sandals of Lord Ram that he had brought back with him as a token of the Lord's presence on the throne of the kingdom, and himself he retired to lead a stern life of renunciation like a true recluse, similar to the one he would have lived had he physically accompanied Lord Ram to the forest. As for being near to Lord Ram, Bharat had spent his entire time during his days of penance repeating the name of Lord Ram and constantly remembering him each moment of his life, which was a symbolic way of his being in close proximity with the Lord. This is clearly spelled out in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 323—to Doha no. 326.

So in this way, Bharat achieved many objectives with a single effort—he honoured his father's and Lord Ram's wish to stay in the city to look after its affairs; he fulfilled his own wish by symbolically crowning Lord Ram as the king by installing his footwear on the throne; he also fulfilled his another wish of accompanying Lord Ram and sharing his difficulties in the forest by spending an equal number of years that Lord Ram spent in the forest by living a life of strict austerities and penances himself while living in the forested area on the outskirts of Ayodhya.]

अब कृपाल जस आयसु होई । करौं सीस धरि सादर सोई ॥ ७ ॥

सो अवलंब देव मोहि देई । अवधि पारु पावौं जेहि सेई ॥ ८ ॥

aba kṛpāla jasa āyasu hō'ī. karaur̥m sīsa dhari sādara sō'ī. 7.
sō avalamba dēva mōhi dē'ī. avadhi pārū pāvaum̐ jēhi sē'ī. 8.

Now oh merciful and compassionate Lord (kṛpāla), whatever thee wouldst order me to do, I will obey it forthwith with a bowed head, and with the greatest of reverence to thy command. (7)

Now therefore oh Lord (dēva), give me something soon (as a token of your presence with me, something that would stand as a symbol of your blessing for me) so that by

serving it (i.e. by worshipping it in your place, as your representative) I may be able to reach the end of the time of your assignment in the forest (i.e. I may survive the remaining part of the fourteen years you are expected to live in the wilds). (8)

[Note—Bharat told Lord Ram: “Oh my beloved and revered Lord! Whatever symbol you would like to give me, I would accept it with the greatest of reverence, and I would worship it as if I was offering my reverence and worship to you personally. For me, it would act as an anchor of a ship that is tossed about in wild seas; it would be a buoy that would help me cross the turbulent waters of a cruel fate that are made all the more horrifying by the maliciousness of selfish gods; it would act as an anchor to stabilize a ship that seems adrift in the choppy waters of a stormy ocean. Oh Lord, this symbol of yours would be my companion and it would symbolically make your presence felt by me; it would help me to pass my time and wait for the end of the fourteen years when you will come back.”]

दो०. देव देव अभिषेक हित गुरु अनुसासनु पाइ ।

आनेउँ सब तीरथ सलिलु तेहि कहँ काह रजाइ ॥ ३०७ ॥

dōhā.

dēva dēva abhiṣēka hita gura anusāsanu pā'i.

ānē'um̐ saba tīratha salilu tēhi kaham̐ kāha rajā'i. 307.

Meanwhile, oh Lord, I have bought along with me, with the consent of our guru (sage Vasistha), all the necessary accoutrements, including waters collected from all holy places (with the singular aim of anointing thee as the king in the forest itself)¹.

Now, please tell me what am I suppose to do with this collected sacred water.'
(Doha no. 307)

[Note—¹At the time of departure from Ayodhya for the forest, Bharat had ordered to take along all the necessary things needed for anointment of a king, so that he would arrange Lord Ram's anointment in the forest itself—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 186.

Now, here comes the interesting point: When was the water from all holy places collected that was eventually taken by Bharat at the time of his departure, for obviously he had no time to do so before he left Ayodhya to go to the forest to meet Lord Ram? Secondly, how do we become certain that sage Vasistha had approved of it; did Vasistha know about it?

Well, the answer to these twin questions is this:-

(a) The water was collected earlier on the instructions of sage Vasistha, and it was meant to be used for anointment of Lord Ram. It was before Kaikeyi threw her spanner in the wheel and upturned the whole cart*1.

(b) While departing on the journey to Chitrakoot, sage Vasistha led the procession*2, and being the chief priest of the kingdom and a revered senior sage, everything was in his knowing, including the arrangements that were made for the long-haul journey and what logistics were being put into place. Obviously, such an important part of the arrangements as preparing to anoint Lord Ram as the king in the forest must surely have been in his knowledge. The procession was accompanied by a large number of senior Brahmins and citizens of Ayodhya*3, and so Bharat taking

along necessary accoutrements for Lord Ram's anointment in the forest was not a secret thing, but a public-domain knowledge.

{Refer: Ram Charit Manas, *1 = Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 5 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that follow it.

*2 = Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 187.

*3 = Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 187.}]

चौ०. एकु मनोरथु बड़ मन माहीं । सभयँ सकोच जात कहि नाहीं ॥ १ ॥

कहहु तात प्रभु आयसु पाई । बोले बानि सनेह सुहाई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

ēku manōrathu baṛa mana māhīm. sabhayam̃ sakōca jāta kahi nāhīm. 1.
kahahu tāta prabhu āyasu pāī. bōlē bāni sanēha suhāī. 2.

Bharat said: 'Oh Lord, I have a great desire in my heart, but I am afraid that out of hesitation I am not able to speak about it before you.' (1)

Lord Ram replied: 'Say my dear (kahahu tāta), what is it?'

Having received Lord Ram's permission, Bharat spoke in a sweet voice that was pleasant to hear, and was soaked in affection for the Lord. (2)

चित्रकूट सुचि थल तीरथ बन । खग मृग सर सरि निर्झर गिरिगन ॥ ३ ॥

प्रभु पद अंकित अवनि बिसेषी । आयसु होइ त आवौं देखी ॥ ४ ॥

citrakūṭa suci thala tīratha bana. khaga mṛga sara sari nirjhara girigana. 3.
prabhu pada aṅkita avani bisēṣī. āyasu hō'i ta āvaum̃ dēkhī. 4.

Bharat said: 'Chitrakoot is a holy and pleasant place. It has charming forests full of birds and animals, besides having an abundance of ponds, lakes, rivers, waterfalls and undulating hills. (3)

Further, it has the special honour of bearing the Lord's holy footprints on its grounds.

Lord, if I have thy permission, can I go and visit these places and see around for a while.¹ (4)

[Note—¹Everyone who had come to Chitrakoot, whether they had come with Bharat from Ayodhya or from Janakpur with king Janak, had gone around to see the pleasant sights of Chitrakoot and enjoy the beauty of its scenic surroundings—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 251 (citizens of Ayodhya); (ii) Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 280 (citizens of Ayodhya and Janakpur).

But Bharat had been so occupied in his own thoughts trying to find a solution to the vexed issue for which he had come all the way from Ayodhya that he had no opportunity to go around Chitrakoot to enjoy its sights with their exceptional natural beauty. But he was generally aware of them, that the surroundings of Chitrakoot were a magnificent example of charms of mother Nature, for he had viewed them in general while coming to the hermitage of Lord Ram. So therefore, before departure

for Ayodhya, he wished to go around the place and see its beauty, and sort of give some peace to tormented soul by spending some time in the lap of Mother Nature.]

अवसि अत्रि आयसु सिर धरहू । तात बिगतभय कानन चरहू ॥ ५ ॥
 मुनि प्रसाद बनू मंगल दाता । पावन परम सुहावन भ्राता ॥ ६ ॥
 रिषिनायकु जहँ आयसु देहीं । राखेहु तीरथ जलु थल तेहीं ॥ ७ ॥
 मुनि प्रभु बचन भरत सुखु पावा । मुनि पद कमल मुदित सिरु नावा ॥ ८ ॥

avasi atri āyasu sira dharahū. tāta bigatabhaya kānana carahū. 5.
 muni prasāda banu maṅgala dātā. pāvana parama suhāvana bhrātā. 6.
 riṣināyaku jaham' āyasu dēhīm. rākhēhu tīratha jalu thala tēhīm. 7.
 suni prabhu bacana bharata sukhu pāvā. muni pada kamala mudita siru nāvā.
 8.

Lord Ram replied: ‘Sure, go around the place and follow the instructions of sage Atri¹. My dear (tāta)! Be fearless and roam around the forest freely as you wish. (5)

My dear brother (bhrātā)! It is by the grace of the great sage Atri that the forest of Chitrakoot has become so exceptionally auspicious and pleasant itself that it can grant auspiciousness and pleasure to others visiting it. (6)

Wherever the exalted sage Atri (who is not only a senior sage but is also leader of other sages in his community or congregation; “riṣināyaku”) advises you, at that sacred place you must keep the holy sacred waters that you have brought along².’ (7)

Hearing these words of Lord Ram, Bharat felt very happy. Then, he cheerfully bowed his head at the holy feet of the sage (Atri). (8)

[Note—¹Sage Atri was the most prominent sage who lived in Chitrakoot. Even sage Valmiki had mentioned him while advising Lord Ram to go and live in Chitrakoot—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 132.

Now, when Atri came to know that sages Vasistha and Vishwamitra had come to visit Lord Ram, it is quite natural to expect him to come too, as a courteous gesture to welcome these sages in the area where he lived, to meet the visiting sages and exchange pleasantries with them, and also to participate in the discussions that were held in the hermitage of Lord Ram.

So in essence, Atri was present at the time Bharat sought Lord Ram’s permission to go around the forests and hills of Chitrakoot. The presence of sage Atri during the conference is proved in verse no. 8 herein below where we read that ‘Bharat bows his head at the feet of the sage’, obviously meaning that the sage was present on the occasion.

Since sage Atri was like the sovereign in that place, being the most senior sage of the place, Lord Ram thought it wise to seek his blessing for Bharat when the latter goes out for sightseeing. It was a gesture of respect shown to sage Atri by Lord Ram.

At the time of leaving Chitrakoot for his onwards journey into the other parts of the forest, Lord Ram would himself visit sage Atri to seek his blessings and

permission to move on—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 3.

²This is Lord Ram's answer to Bharat's query in Doha no. 307 herein above.]

दो०. भरत राम संबादु सुनि सकल सुमंगल मूल ।
 सुर स्वारथी सराहि कुल बरषत सुरतरु फूल ॥ ३०८ ॥
 dōhā.

bharata rāma sambādu suni sakala sumaṅgala mūla.
 sura svārathī sarāhi kula baraṣata surataru phūla. 308.

Hearing the auspicious conversation between Bharat and Lord Ram, which was like a root of a tree that grants happiness and joy to everyone who heard it, the selfish gods felt very glad and relieved, and to show their satisfaction at the outcome they rained flowers from the sky. (Doha no. 308)

[Note—The gods had wanted Lord Ram to continue with his journey into the forest instead of either agreeing to accept being anointed as the king or returning home to oblige Bharat. Now that their wish was fulfilled, the gods were very happy, and to show their happiness they showered flowers from the heaven.]

चौ०. धन्य भरत जय राम गोसाईं । कहत देव हरषत बरिआई ॥ १ ॥
 मुनि मिथिलेस सभाँ सब काहू । भरत बचन सुनि भयउ उछाहू ॥ २ ॥
 caupāī.

dhan'ya bharata jaya rāma gōsā'īm. kahata dēva haraṣata bari'ā'īm. 1.
 muni mithilēsa sabhām̐ saba kāhū. bharata bacana suni bhaya'u uchāhū. 2.

The gods applauded Bharat and Lord Ram even as they felt exhilarated at the positive turn of events, saying in unison: 'Praise to Bharat, and glory to our Lord Ram.' (1)

Everyone present in that assembly, including the exalted sages Vasistha, Vishwamitra and Atri, as well as king Janak—all were in praise of Bharat, and his words made them feel very happy and cheerful (as they rejoiced at the amicable solution, that ended all consternations and vexations, was finally found). (2)

[Note—Everyone thanked Bharat for adopting a practical and prudent stand, and not insisting on pressing ahead with his own wishes of anointing Lord Ram on the throne of the kingdom in a symbolic manner in the forest itself, of trying to enforce his own will of taking Lord Ram back to Ayodhya, and for accepting willingly to act as a caretaker of the kingdom during the period of fourteen years that Lord Ram was expected to live in the forest. By adopting a flexible and accommodating stance, Bharat helped to resolve the issue, that apparently defied a solution a while ago, within the parameters of Dharma; it saved Lord Ram from a very delicate situation

which otherwise would have put the Lord in an extremely embarrassing and sticky position.]

भरत राम गुन ग्राम सनेहू । पुलकि प्रसंसत राउ बिदेहू ॥ ३ ॥
 सेवक स्वामि सुभाउ सुहावन । नेमु पेमु अति पावन पावन ॥ ४ ॥
 मति अनुसार सराहन लागे । सचिव सभासद सब अनुरागे ॥ ५ ॥

bharata rāma guna grāma sanēhū. pulaki prasansata rā'u bidēhū. 3.
 sēvaka svāmi subhā'u suhāvana. nēmu pēmu ati pāvana pāvana. 4.
 mati anusāra sarāhana lāgē. saciva sabhāsada saba anurāgē. 5.

King of Videha (i.e. king Janak) praised the virtues and glories of both Bharat and Lord Ram in lavish terms¹, with his body thrilled with joy as he did it. (3)

The mutual relationship marked by trust, faith, affection, love, amiability, and respect for each other's views and emotions, that existed between Bharat and Lord Ram, set a glorious benchmark of how a servant and his master should treat each other, of the kind of respect and affection that should exist between the two, and of the rules that should govern this relationship.

Verily indeed, in all sooth and without gainsay, this relationship between the two brothers was exceptionally pleasant; it was nectarine and sublime by its nature. (4)

Everyone present on the occasion, such as the ministers as well as all others who attended the conference, hailed both Bharat and Lord Ram; they began to praise them and applauded the exemplary brotherly relationship that existed between them in accordance with their individual skills at the use of words, and the competence and the abilities of their minds.

[To wit, everyone was hailing and praising the two brothers, but each did it in his or her own way as they highlighted the two brothers' virtues and characters in the way they saw and understood them from their personal perspectives, as well as the competence they had for expression of their views.]² (5)

[Note—¹Janak had earlier praised Bharat and Lord Ram before his wife Sunayana as narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 288—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 290.

We may recall that king Janak had praised Lord Ram when he first met the Lord at the time sage Vishwamitra had taken Lord Ram and his younger brother Laxman to attend the 'bow-breaking' ceremony in Janakpur, an occasion that culminated in the marriage of the Lord with Sita. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 215—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 216; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 2-5 that precede Doha no. 217.}

However, the present occasion showed how much Bharat and Lord Ram loved each other, for on one hand Bharat was ready to sacrifice everything and his own wish if it pleased Lord Ram, and the Lord had been so polite and kind to him, speaking to Bharat in the most loving and affectionate manner imaginable, that not only Janak but all others too who heard the conversation were stirred with waves of emotions in their hearts.

²We have read in verse nos. 1-3 herein above that the gods, the sages and king Janak had extolled the virtues of Bharat and Lord Ram as they praised the two brothers. Now, this verse completes the picture by saying that not only them, but everyone else present on the occasion had honoured them in the way they could.

To wit, there was an all-round applause for Bharat and Lord Ram, from the heavens by the gods, and on the ground by those who attended the conference.]

सुनि सुनि राम भरत संबादू । दुहु समाज हियँ हरषु बिषादू ॥ ६ ॥
राम मातु दुखु सुखु सम जानी । कहि गुन राम प्रबोधी रानी ॥ ७ ॥
एक कहहिं रघुबीर बड़ाई । एक सराहत भरत भलाई ॥ ८ ॥

sunī sunī rāma bharata sambādū. duhu samāja hiyaṁ haraṣu biṣādū. 6.
rāma mātu dukhu sukhu sama jānī. kahi guṇa rāma prabōdhīm rānī. 7.
ēka kahahīm raghubīra baṛāī. ēka sarāhata bharata bhalāī. 8.

The conversation that took place between Lord Ram and Bharat was later repeated and retold by those who had participated in the conference before other people of the two kingdoms who could not attend the meeting personally, and had thus missed an opportunity to hear the conversation directly.

As the details of the conversation spread and became known to others in the camp, the citizens of the two kingdoms had a mixed feeling of joy and sadness sprouting in their hearts simultaneously¹. (6)

Meanwhile, Lord Ram's mother (Kaushalya) showed exemplary equanimity, fortitude, resilience and self-restraint by treating sadness and sorrows as being equal to happiness and joy².

Being the queen mother and the senior-most member of the family, she comforted other queens, her juniors, by outlining the virtues of Lord Ram and explaining to them the compulsions that the Lord faced while declining to return home. (7)

Someone in the camp praised Lord Ram, while someone else admired Bharat (but everyone hailed the amicable, affable, judicious and mutually acceptable way in which the two brothers had resolved the confounded issue to the satisfaction of everyone)³.* (8)

[Note—¹Some felt sorry that Lord Ram would not return home immediately; others felt joy because the interaction between Bharat and Lord Ram proved how much they loved and respected each other. Some felt sad for Bharat because his life without Lord Ram would be full of pain and grief, while others felt happy for him as he was blessed by Lord Ram, and his decision to obey the Lord was the right thing to do, as it would give him eternal fame. Some empathized with Bharat and felt sorry for him, while others raised a toast to honour him for his excellent virtues, principles and character.

²If Lord Ram had decided to return home, it would have been an occasion for celebration for Kaushalya; it would have given her immense joy. But in the event of the Lord deciding to remain in the forest, which obviously was sad for her, Kaushalya

did not get upset, but she remained poised and calm because of her nature of equanimity, tolerance and fortitude that enabled her to treat all situations alike.

We have already had a glimpse of Kaushalya's wise, tolerant, resilient and magnanimous nature. She had shown equanimity, self-restraint and courage at the time Lord Ram had first told her that he has been sent to forest exile. She took the stand that the principles of Dharma should take precedence over emotions*1. She had treated Kaikeyi on equal terms as her own self, without discriminating against her at all, which is proved when she tells Lord Ram that if he has been ordered to go to the forest by both his parents, meaning his father Dasrath and his 'mother' Kaikeyi, then he must proceed to the forest without any hesitation*2. Nowhere in the whole story of the Ram Charit Manas there is even one instance where Kaushalya is shown as having rancour, or of criticizing, rebuking or humiliating Kaikeyi for the mischief she had perpetrated.

Then again, when Bharat met her after the Lord had already departed for the forest, then inspite of knowing that it was in the name of Bharat that her son, Lord Ram, was denied the throne and banished to the forest, Kaushalya showed love and affection to him, embracing him and caressing him as if Lord Ram himself has returned to her*3. Still later on, she had joined sage Vasistha and other advisors in advising Bharat to accept the crown in the absence of Lord Ram*4.

{Refer: Ram Charit Manas, *1 =Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 53—to Doha no. 55.

*2 =Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 56.

*3 =Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 164 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede it; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 165—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 167.

*4 = Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 176.}

³In this context, refer to Chaupai line no. 5 herein above where we have read the same thing. So, this present verse is an extension of that verse, and it kind of rounds-off the description of the general atmosphere that prevailed in the two camps: viz. some people praised Bharat's virtues and character, while other praised Lord Ram. But generally, everyone was glad that the issue has been resolved between the two brothers amicably, affably, and to the satisfaction of all.

*With this verse, the second round of conference came to an end.]

दो०. अत्रि कहेउ तब भरत सन सैल समीप सुकूप ।

राखिअ तीरथ तोय तहँ पावन अमिअ अनूप ॥ ३०९ ॥

dōhā.

atri kahē'u taba bharata sana saila samīpa sukūpa.
rākhi'a tīratha tōya taham' pāvana ami'a anūpa. 309.

Then, sage Atri told Bharat: 'Near this hill, there is an auspicious well. You should place the sacred waters you have brought with you in it.'¹ (Doha no. 309)

[Note—¹This advice of sage Atri is in response to Lord Ram's instructions to Bharat regarding what is to be done with the waters from holy places that he had brought

along with the objective of using them for the anointment ceremony of Lord Ram in the forest itself. Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 307—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 308.]

चौ०. भरत अत्रि अनुसासन पाई । जल भाजन सब दिऐ चलाई ॥ १ ॥
 सानुज आपु अत्रि मुनि साधू । सहित गए जहँ कूप अगाधू ॥ २ ॥
 caupāī.

bharata atri anusāsana pāī. jala bhājana saba di'ē calāī. 1.
 sānuja āpu atri muni sādū. sahita ga'ē jaham' kūpa agādhū. 2.

After receiving instructions from sage Atri, Bharat ordered that the bearers should carry the pitchers of sacred waters to the place indicated by the sage. (1)

Then Bharat, along with his younger brother (Shatrughan), and accompanied by sage Atri and other senior sages and holy men present on the occasion, himself followed the water-bearers and went to the place where the well, which was very deep and had an endless supply of sweet water, was located. (2)

पावन पाथ पुन्यथल राखा । प्रमुदित प्रेम अत्रि अस भाषा ॥ ३ ॥
 तात अनादि सिद्ध थल एहू । लोपेउ काल बिदित नहिं केहू ॥ ४ ॥
 तब सेवकन्ह सरस थलु देखा । कीन्ह सुजल हित कूप बिसेषा ॥ ५ ॥
 बिधि बस भयउ बिस्व उपकारू । सुगम अगम अति धरम बिचारू ॥ ६ ॥

pāvana pātha pun'yathala rākhā. pramudita prēma atri asa bhāṣā. 3.
 tāta anādi sid'dha thala ēhū. lōpē'u kāla bidita nahim kēhū. 4.
 taba sēvakanha sarasa thalu dēkhā. kīnha sujala hita kūpa bisēṣā. 5.
 bidhi basa bhaya'u bisva upakārū. sugama agama ati dharama bicārū. 6.

The sacred waters (collected from different religious places and meant for anointment of Lord Ram that was) brought by Bharat was put into that holy well.

Thereafter, the exhilarated sage Atri said as follows— (3)

‘My dear (tāta)! This place has been a sacred and consecrated place since time immemorial. But over time it had become obscured from view and no one knew about its existence. (4)

However, in due course of time the disciples (sēvakanha), who were searching for a potable water source, discovered it, and then they resurrected this long-forgotten well, expanding and reviving it¹. (5)

Verily indeed, it is such a good fortune that due to providence and blessings of the Creator, this event has become a boon for the world. It has brought the reward and blessings that one would get by visiting so many religious places, spread over different parts of the world, at one single place, thereby making it very convenient for

the people of the world to fulfill their religious obligations (by visiting one place instead of countless places scattered in different parts of the world). (6)

[Note—¹When sage Atri came to Chitrakoot to establish his hermitage, the first necessity that he felt for survival was the need for a perennial source of clean and sweet potable water. He thus sent his disciples to scout around to locate some water body, whereat the disciples discovered this well. Since the area was thickly forested and virtually uninhabited, the well was surrounded by thickets, and its mouth was covered by branches and foliage of overgrown trees and wild bushes.

So, sage Atri's disciples cleared the area and cleaned the long-forgotten and neglected well, to discover to their joy that it has nectarine water. Then, sage Atri established his hermitage somewhere near it.]

भरतकूप अब कहिहहिं लोगा । अति पावन तीरथ जल जोगा ॥ ७ ॥

प्रेम सनेम निमज्जत प्राणी । होइहहिं बिमल करम मन बानी ॥ ८ ॥

bharatakūpa aba kahihahiṃ lōgā. ati pāvana tīratha jala jōgā. 7.
prēma sanēma nimajjata prāṇī. hō'ihahiṃ bimala karama mana bānī. 8.

Now henceforth, the people of the world would call this well after your name, viz. it would be known as 'Bharat's well' from today onwards to honour you and your contribution to its renewed and enhanced glory, because it is you who have added to the glory of this well by putting into it sacred waters collected from different holy places, thereby making this single well a source of combined sacredness of so many holy places, scattered in different parts of the world, brought at a single place¹.

This is a rarest of rare conjunction of holiness that would grant a person who comes to this well and drinks its water, the combined blessings and spiritual rewards that he would get by visiting these holy places individually (which is a very strenuous and time consuming endeavour). (7)

By bathing in the water of this sanctified well and drinking its water, a person would be able to attain purification of his body and soul; he would be able to purify his deeds, his mind and his words (or speech) (bimala karama mana bānī).' (8)

[Note—¹Atri declared that henceforth this 'well' will be called "Bharat's well" to honour Bharat, as well as to commemorate the occasion of his visit, and recognize his donation of waters collected from all chief religious places in the world.

This 'well' at Chitrakoot acquired a sacredness and holiness that was much greater than that possessed even by 'Triveni', because in the latter case only three holy rivers unite, viz. Ganges, Yamuna and Saraswati, but in the well at Chitrakoot waters from all sacred places in the world had been mixed at one place, thereby giving its sacredness and holiness a multiplying effect.]

दो०. कहत कूप महिमा सकल गए जहाँ रघुराउ ।

अत्रि सुनायउ रघुबरहि तीरथ पुन्य प्रभाउ ॥ ३१० ॥

dōhā.

kahata kūpa mahimā sakala ga'e jahām' raghurā'u.
atri sunāya'u raghubarahi tīratha pun'ya prabhā'u. 310.

Thence, everyone went back to the place where Lord Ram was (in his hermitage), and on the way they conversed about the glory and sacredness of the 'well'.

When they reached Lord Ram, sage Atri told the Lord about the glory and the holiness, and the consequent importance of that well in particular, and the sacredness of the area around it in general (because this area has now become a pilgrimage place by the virtue of Lord Ram spending some days here, and by the virtue of the well, now known as 'Bharat's well', as it now contains the sacred waters from many important religious places). (Doha no. 310)

चौ०. कहत धरम इतिहास सप्रीती । भयउ भोरु निसि सो सुख बीती ॥ १ ॥
नित्य निबाहि भरत दोउ भाई । राम अत्रि गुर आयसु पाई ॥ २ ॥
सहित समाज साज सब सादे । चले राम बन अटन पयादे ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

kahata dharama itihāsa saprīti. bhaya'u bhōru nisi sō sukha bīti. 1.
nitya nibāhi bharata dō'u bhāī. rāma atri gura āyasu pāī. 2.
sahita samāja sāja saba sādēm. calē rāma bana aṭana payādēm. 3.

Narrating and expounding on the different scriptures and ancient histories related to the principles of Dharma (i.e. religious treatises that deal with various aspects of right conduct and thought), the people spent the night happily till the day dawned the next morning¹. (1)

In the morning, both the brothers, Bharat and his younger brother Shatrughan, after doing their routine chores of washing and offering of prayers, went to take permission from sage Atri and Lord Ram. (2)

Thence, after attiring themselves in a simple way, Bharat collected all the members of his camp, and the two brothers went out on foot to visit to surrounding forests and hills of Chitrakoot². (3)

[Note—¹We read about a similar event when the whole night was spent by the citizens of Ayodhya in a happy mood, discussing things and cheerfully preparing themselves to depart for Chitrakoot to meet Lord Ram the next morning—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 185—to Chaupai line no. that precedes Doha no. 187.

Another instance is found when king Janak and his wife, queen Sunayana, spent the whole night discussing the virtues of Bharat and Lord Ram, till the day dawned the next morning—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 290.

²This was to fulfill Bharat's desire to visit all the sights worth seeing and paying respect to at Chitrakoot as narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 308.

Of course it may be safely deduced that Bharat had paid a second visit to the consecrated 'well' where he had poured, on the instructions of sage Atri, the sacred waters that he had brought along from Ayodhya for the anointment of Lord Ram. The first time was for the formal consecration of this well, but he would visit it once again now as a pilgrimage.

As Bharat had already told Lord Ram earlier while seeking the Lord's nod to go and visit the surrounding areas of Chitrakoot as noted in the verses quoted herein above, Bharat's trip was more a sort of a pilgrimage rather than as a tourist, though of course both the benefits come combined if one has the right attitude: one cannot prevent one's self from seeing and enjoying the beautiful scenes around the place one visits, much like an awe-struck tourist, at the same time as being a pilgrim performing his religious obligations. As Bharat had said to Lord Ram, he wished to see the beauty of Nature in Chitrakoot, with its undulating hills, verdant forests, valleys and meadows, water bodies such as ponds, lakes and waterfalls, etc.—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 308.

But Bharat was more a 'pilgrim' than a 'tourist'. How do we deduce this: Well, the answer is obvious: Bharat went on the trip 'bare foot' like a pilgrim is expected to, and not as a tourist wearing shoes to protect his foot from sores in a rough terrain. Another evidence is that he had attired himself in 'simple clothes', perhaps something basic to wrap around his body.

Still another proof is that at the time of seeking Lord Ram's permission earlier, he had emphasized that he wants to visit all the sights associated with the Lord, places where Lord Ram had set his foot—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 308.]

कोमल चरन चलत बिनु पनहीं । भइ मृदु भूमि सकुचि मन मनहीं ॥ ४ ॥
 कुस कंटक काँकरीं कुराई । कटुक कठोर कुबस्तु दुराई ॥ ५ ॥
 महि मंजुल मृदु मारग कीन्हे । बहत समीर त्रिबिध सुख लीन्हे ॥ ६ ॥
 सुमन बरषि सुर घन करि छाहीं । बिटप फूलि फलि तृन मृदुताहीं ॥ ७ ॥
 मृग बिलोकि खग बोलि सुबानी । सेवहिं सकल राम प्रिय जानी ॥ ८ ॥

kōmala carana calata binu panahīm. bha'i mṛdu bhūmi sakuci mana manahīm. 4.

kusa kaṇṭaka kāmkarīm kurā'īm. kaṭuka kaṭhōra kubastu durā'īm. 5.
 mahi mañjula mṛdu māraga kīnhē. bahata samīra tribidha sukha līnhē. 6.
 sumana baraṣi sura ghana kari chāhīm. biṭapa phūli phali tṛna mṛdutāhīm. 7.
 mṛga bilōki khaga bōli subānī. sēvahīm sakala rāma priya jānī. 8.

Finding that Bharat (and his younger brother, Shatrughan) had tender feet and were walking barefoot¹, the earth itself felt embarrassed so much so that it rendered the ground under their feet soft. (4)

The earth hid all things that were hard and harsh for the feet, and would cause suffering to the two brothers, viz. it concealed dried grass blades, twigs with sharp edges, stones, thorns and uneven ground. [To wit, the earth softened the soil and

removed all sharp things from the path that the two brothers and their companions would take.] (5)

The ground was made soft and comfortable to walk on, while a pleasant breeze provided additional comfort to the people. (6)

The gods pitched in with their help by showering flowers from the sky and sending clouds to provide shade².

[To wit, the gods expressed their respect and appreciation for Bharat by showering flowers from the heaven. This rain of flowers also served to further soften the ground and made it soft-like-a-carpet on which Bharat and others walked. Besides this, Indra, the king of the gods who controls rain-bearing cool clouds, aided the process by ordering clouds to provide shade to the procession below.]

The trees became laden with flowers and fruits, while the grass below became green, soft and tender.

[Not to be outdone, the plant kingdom, represented by trees standing above the ground and grass lying close to the ground, too pitched in by making the trees bloom with flowers and fruits, and the grass go green and soft. Since the forest consists primarily of trees that stand above the ground and grass that lie close to the ground, the path of Bharat and his companions was made exceptionally beautiful and comfortable.] (7)

On behalf of the animal kingdom, the forest-dwelling animals and birds chipped in. The animals looked at Bharat and those accompanying him with pleasant glances, and the birds chirped, warbled and tweeted sweetly as if singing in unison in their praise.

In essence, every unit of Mother Nature was serving Bharat and his companions as they recognized them to be very dear to Lord Ram³. (8)

[Note—¹Bharat had started walking on foot, without wearing any kind of footwear, a little after they had left Ayodhya, from the banks of river Ganges at Sringeripur—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 203; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 204.

²A similar event is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 217 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it where we read that Mother Nature and the Gods went out of her way to provide the best care they could to Bharat as he was on his way to Chitrakoot, by softening the ground, giving shade of clouds overhead, showering flowers to further soften the ground, and making a sweet, scented and cool breeze to blow over the procession.

³They were following the dictum that Lord Ram is a friend of all, and that those who are dear to the Lord are dear to them as well—refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 74.]

दो०. सुलभ सिद्धि सब प्राकृतहु राम कहत जमुहात ।

राम प्रान प्रिय भरत कहँ यह न होइ बड़ि बात ॥ ३११ ॥

dōhā.

sulabha sid'dhi saba prākṛtahu rāma kahata jamuhāta.
rāma prāna priya bharata kahum̐ yaha na hō'i baḍi bāta. 311.

All sorts of achievements and successes are attainable by uttering the holy name of Lord Ram even while a person yawns in the normal course of his life (because it is deemed to be equivalent to invoking the mystical powers that are an integral part of the holy name of the Lord which is like a 'Mantra', or a spiritual formula that grants everything one expects)¹, so therefore it is no wonder that all aspects of Creation (including the Earth, Gods and Mother Nature) would honour Bharat who was extremely dear to Lord Ram². (Doha no. 311).

[Note—¹This idea is expressed elsewhere also in relation to Guha Nishad—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 194.

The glory and spiritual importance of Lord Ram's holy name has been elaborately described in Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 19—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 28; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 2-6 that precede Doha no. 46; (b) Uttar Kand, (iii) Doha no. 124-a.

²That Bharat was extremely dear to Lord Ram was affirmed by (a) mother Kaushalya, (b) the deity of Triveni, and (c) sage Bharadwaj. {Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 169 (Kaushalya); (ii) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 205 (Triveni); and (iii) Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 208 (sage Bharadwaj).}

चौ०. एहि बिधि भरतु फिरत बन माहीं । नेमु प्रेमु लखि मुनि सकुचाहीं ॥ १ ॥
पुन्य जलाश्रय भूमि बिभागा । खग मृग तरु तृन गिरि बन बागा ॥ २ ॥
चारु बिचित्र पबित्र बिसेषी । बूझत भरतु दिव्य सब देखी ॥ ३ ॥
सुनि मन मुदित कहत रिषिराऊ । हेतु नाम गुन पुन्य प्रभाऊ ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

ēhi bidhi bharatu phirata bana māhīm̐. nēmu prēmu lakhi muni sakucāhīm̐. 1.
pun'ya jalāśraya bhūmi bibhāgā. khaga mṛga taru tṛna giri bana bāgā. 2.
cāru bicitra pabitra bisēṣī. būjhata bharatu dibya saba dēkhī. 3.
suni mana mudita kahata riṣirā'ū. hētu nāma guna pun'ya prabhā'ū. 4.

In this way, Bharat roamed around the forests (of Chitrakoot, like a pilgrim). Observing his austerities and pious demeanours, his strict observances of vows and his love for Lord Ram, the sages, hermits, ascetics and mystics who dwelled there (in the surrounding forests) felt shy (because when they compared themselves with Bharat, they discovered that their austerities, observance of vows, devotion and piety were no match for Bharat's, that Bharat surpassed them on all counts). (1)

Bharat visited many places and saw the countless scenes of beauty that abounded all around him. He saw sacred water bodies (such as ponds, wells, streams etc.), holy spots at different places; he saw animals, birds, trees, grass, hills, forests, gardens and orchards¹. (2)

They were all exceptionally charming and bewitching to behold, and were auspicious and blessed as well². Bharat wished to learn more about these holy places he visited (3)

So upon his enquiry, the exalted sage who was like a king amongst the community of sages living in the area (“riṣirā'ū”; obviously it was sage Atri)³ felt very glad even as he told Bharat about the significance and importance of each site. (4)

[Note—¹We have already read how Mother Nature would instruct all her components to put their best faces before Bharat so as to serve him and ensure that he feels happy and refreshed by seeing the sights and hearing the sounds of Nature. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 311 herein above.}]

²The places Bharat would visit were special because they had been visited by Lord Ram earlier. The places where Lord Ram had set his holy feet were as good as a pilgrimage place for Bharat. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 308.}

³This honourable epithet, “riṣirā'ū”, has been used by Lord Ram for sage Atri earlier—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 308.

Hence, it clearly means that sage Atri had accompanied Bharat during his trip.]

कतहुँ निमज्जन कतहुँ प्रनामा । कतहुँ बिलोकत मन अभिरामा ॥ ५ ॥
कतहुँ बैठि मुनि आयसु पाई । सुमिरत सीय सहित दोउ भाई ॥ ६ ॥

katahum̐ nimajjana katahum̐ pranāmā. katahum̐ bilōkata mana abhirāmā. 5.
katahum̐ baiṭhi muni āyasu pā'ī. sumirata sīya sahita dō'u bhā'ī. 6.

At some of these places Bharat would take a refreshing bath, at other places he would bow his head to pay his respects, and at some other site he would see the sights and praise them. (5)

At some other place he would sit down for a while on the instructions of the sage (Atri) to meditate, remembering Lord Ram and Sita as he did so. (6)

देखि सुभाउ सनेहु सुसेवा । देहिं असीस मुदित बनदेवा ॥ ७ ॥
फिरहिं गएँ दिनु पहर अढ़ाई । प्रभु पद कमल बिलोकहिं आई ॥ ८ ॥

dēkhi subhā'u sanēhu susēvā. dēhiṁ asīsa mudita banadēvā. 7.
phirahiṁ ga'eṁ̐ dinu pahara aṛḥā'ī. prabhu pada kamala bilōkahiṁ ā'ī. 8.

Seeing Bharat's exemplary character, his good disposition, his pious nature, and his sense of devotion marked by the virtue of love and affection (that he had for Lord Ram), as well as the auspicious nature of service he was doing while visiting the different consecrated places in the forest, the deities of the area (*banadēvā*) were mightily pleased with him and cheerfully blessed in a variety of ways. (7)

In this way, after spending about two and a half quarters of the day in going around the places of Chitrakoot that surrounded the hermitage of Lord Ram, Bharat would come back to report to Lord Ram and see his lotus-like feet.

[To wit, Bharat would go out in the morning and roam till around late in the afternoon at which time, before sunset in the evening, he would come back to Lord Ram and inform the Lord of his wonderings during the day. The phrase 'to see Lord Ram's lotus-like feet' is simply another way of saying that Bharat came back and bowed before Lord Ram and touched his feet before sitting down to narrate the day's events to the Lord.] (8)

दो०. देखे थल तीरथ सकल भरत पाँच दिन माझ ।
कहत सुनत हरि हर सुजसु गयउ दिवसु भइ साँझ ॥ ३१२ ॥
dōhā.

dēkhē thala tīratha sakala bharata pām̐ca dina mājha.
kahata sunata hari hara sujasu gaya'u divasu bha'i sām̐jha. 312.

In this way, Bharat saw all the places and pilgrimage sites in the area within a span of five days.

The days were spent by him talking and listening about the glories and holiness of Lords Hari and Har (Lord Vishnu and Lord Shiva respectively), and as evening returned, he would come back (to report to Lord Ram). (Doha no. 312)

चौ०. भोर न्हाइ सबु जुरा समाजू । भरत भूमिसुर तेरहुति राजू ॥ १ ॥
भल दिन आजु जानि मन माहीं । रामु कृपाल कहत सकुचाहीं ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

bhōra nhā'i sabu jurā samājū. bharata bhūmisura tērahuti rājū. 1.
bhala dina āju jāni mana māhīm̐. rāmu kṛpāla kahata sakucāhīm̐. 2.

On the morning of the sixth day, everyone, including Bharat, Brahmins, king Janak etc., took their baths and assembled at a place. (1)

Lord Ram thought to himself that it was the proper day to finally decide what has to be done, but the merciful Lord was feeling hesitant to say anything¹. * (2)

[Note—¹Lord Ram felt that Bharat's desire to see the sights around Chitrakoot has been fulfilled*1, and the waters of sacred places that he had brought have been suitably placed*2. Prior to that, it had been decided by Bharat that what Lord Ram would say will be accepted by him. This stand of Bharat was endorsed by all

concerned, including the gods, king Janak, sages Vasistha, Atri and others, the queens including mother Kaushalya and mother-in-law Sunayana, as well as the members of the two camps (Ayodhya and Janakpur citizens)*.

{Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, *1 = Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 308.

*2 = (i) Doha no. 307; (ii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 308; (iii) Doha no. 309—to Doha no. 310.

*3 = Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 309.}

But the Lord was feeling reluctant to say anything because he was not certain if Bharat and others would like to stay at Chitrakoot for some time more, or if they would like to go back now. Lord Ram's hesitance was understandable, for we have read that on an earlier occasion when he had asked sage Vasistha to resolve the issue quickly, the sage had deferred it and told Lord Ram to let the people relax and enjoy his company for some more time. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 248 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede it.}

*Now will start the 'third conference' at Chitrakoot.]

गुर नृप भरत सभा अवलोकी । सकुचि राम फिरि अवनि बिलोकी ॥ ३ ॥
सील सराहि सभा सब सोची । कहूँ न राम सम स्वामि सँकोची ॥ ४ ॥

gura nrpa bharata sabhā avalōkī. sakuci rāma phiri avani bilōkī. 3.
sīla sarāhi sabhā saba sōcī. kahum̐ na rāma sama svāmi samkōcī. 4.

Lord Ram looked around and glanced at those sitting all around him, such as his guru (sage Vasistha), the king (Janak), Bharat, and all other seniors (who had assembled to attend this final conference), but feeling embarrassed to speak first, the Lord lowered his eyes and looked at the ground in front of him.

[To wit, Lord Ram did not wish to speak first, as it would seem indecent and un-courteous on his part, and as if he was feeling restless with the crowd of people in his hermitage and wished they go back to their homes at the earliest. So, he looked at those surrounding him with embarrassment and then lowered his eyes.] (3)

The assembly observed that the Lord was feeling very hesitation to speak, and everyone present there appreciated his courteous and hesitant nature (that he does not want to offend anyone), saying amongst themselves that there is no other Lord as good natured and polite as Lord Ram who would feel so shy before his own people (in the fear that what he proposes to say or do may hurt someone amongst his audience).
(4)

भरत सुजान राम रुख देखी । उठि सप्रेम धरि धीर बिसेषी ॥ ५ ॥
करि दंडवत कहत कर जोरी । राखीं नाथ सकल रुचि मोरी ॥ ६ ॥

bharata sujāna rāma rukha dēkhī. uṭhi saprēma dhari dhīra bisēṣī. 5.
kari daṇḍavata kahata kara jōrī. rākhīm nātha sakala ruci mōrī. 6.

Meanwhile, Bharat, who was wise and intelligent, silently observed that Lord Ram wishes to say something but was feeling shy to speak. So he gathered special courage to intercede on behalf of the Lord¹, and stood up affectionately to speak on the occasion. (5)

Bharat prostrated before Lord Ram (“daṇḍavata”; literally ‘fell like a stick before the Lord’), and joining the palms of his hands he began to speak: ‘Oh Lord, you have upheld all the desires of mine, and you have fulfilled all the wishes that I had². (4)

[Note—¹There was a pin-drop silence in the assembly; no one dared to say a word before Lord Ram and other seniors present there. This silence seemed to stretch endlessly, and with each passing moment Bharat noticed that Lord Ram’s embarrassment also increased. So, Bharat thought to himself that he must act wisely and break the silence. He had to collect his wits together and become bold because as soon as he starts to stand up, all eyes would turn to him. Besides this, Lord Ram has not as yet asked Bharat to say anything, and therefore it was Bharat’s personal initiative. Speaking without being invited to speak before seniors does not seem nice. These are the reasons why Bharat had to collect ‘special courage’ to stand up and face Lord Ram as well as the assembly, and speak before them.

²Lord Ram had shown exceptional love and affection for Bharat; the Lord had embraced him and honoured him publicly*1, going to the extent of saying that he was willing to do what Bharat wants even if that meant breaking his and his father’s words*2. The main issue that was tormenting Bharat’s heart and hurt him the most was whether Lord Ram had lost affection for him in the backdrop of what his evil mother had done without his knowledge*3. So, with this main issue settled in his favour, Bharat was fully satisfied*4.

On the other secondary issues, such as the Lord accepting the crown and going back to Ayodhya, Bharat felt it would be best for him to leave the decision on the Lord himself*5, especially when he observed how the gods had become fidgety and nervous, praying to him (Bharat) not to press on further with these two secondary issues*6 as they related to some important mission for which the Lord had come to the forest in the first place—which was to honour the word he had given to the gods, mother earth and sages in some ancient time that he would personally pursue the cause of elimination of the tyranny of the cruel demons*7, and this could only be made possible by going to their habitat in the wild forests that were infested by the demons*8.

Further, Lord Ram has clearly requested Bharat to share this burden like a true and devoted brother*9. What impressed Bharat the most was that at no time the Lord had shown any impoliteness or harshness towards him; the Lord had made all suggestions to him most courteously as if the Lord was literally begging Bharat to cooperate with him*10.

Hence, Bharat felt that now it was his duty and responsibility to reciprocate the courteousness and affection that the Lord had shown to him by bowing before the Lord’s wish and accepting it like a true servant who would keep his master’s wish on the top*11 instead of adamantly pursuing his own agenda. That obviously would not be good on any count. This is why Bharat declares that Lord Ram has accepted and

fulfilled all his wishes, including his wish that he accompanies the Lord wherever he goes*12.

{Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, *1 = Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 240—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 241.

*2 = (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 259; (ii) Doha no. 264 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it.

*3 = (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 178; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 3-6 that precedes Doha no. 179; (iii) Doha no. 182; (iv) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 233—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 234.

*4 = (i) Doha no. 298; (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 300—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 301; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 307.

*5 = (i) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 266; (ii) Doha no. 269; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 307.

*6 = (i) Chaupai line nos. 2-7 that precede Doha no. 266; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 296.

*7 = Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 187.

*8 = Doha no. 11 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it.

*9 = Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 306.

*10 = Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 306.

*11 = Doha no. 306 along with Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede it.

*12 = Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 307.}]

मोहि लागि सहेउ सबहिं संतापू । बहुत भाँति दुखु पावा आपू ॥ ७ ॥
अब गोसाइँ मोहि देउ रजाई । सेवौं अवध अवधि भरि जाई ॥ ८ ॥

mōhi lagi sahē'u sabahim̐ santāpū. bahuta bhām̐ti dukhu pāvā āpū. 7.
aba gōsā'im̐ mōhi dē'u rajā'ī. sēvaum̐ avadha avadhi bhari jā'ī. 8.

Oh Lord, you have suffered immensely due to me; it is on my account that you had to endure hardships of various kinds¹. (7)

Now however oh Lord, please grant me your permission so that I can go back and serve Ayodhya (and its citizens on your behalf)² for the duration of the time you are to spend in the forest³. (8)

[Note—¹Bharat told Lord Ram with a heavy heart: “Lord, I have no words to express my regret and the intensity of my grief and shame on this count. It’s a fact that I can’t deny and turn a blind eye to. But nevertheless, since thou hast asked me to ‘share the misfortune with you and the burden of taking care of the kingdom and its subjects*1’, I will do so accordingly, this I promise you.”

And sure enough, Bharat did exactly this—because after returning to Ayodhya, he put the footwear of Lord Ram on the throne as a symbolic presence of the Lord, and himself went to the outskirts of the city and spent the entire time, that Lord Ram lived in the forest, as a hermit himself, observing the strictest of vows and austerities*2. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, *1 = Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 306; and *2 = Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 324—Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 326.}

In the current verse that we are reading, Bharat is reiterating before Lord Ram what he had told the assembly at Ayodhya earlier; it was something that had caused immense torment to Bharat's heart. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 179; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 6, 8 that precede Doha no. 182.}

Later on, while on his way to Chitrakoot, Bharat has also expressed his grief to Guha Nishad whom he had befriended and who was acting as his guide. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 199—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 201.}

Even Lord Ram has accepted that life in the forest is full of sufferings and hardships. This would be clear when we read what the Lord told sage Vasistha in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 290.

Earlier, the Lord had outlined the details of hardships of forest to Sita in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 62—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 63.

²Bharat was honouring Lord Ram's request to him as narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 306 along with Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede it.

³How long would it be? Well, Lord Ram had himself said told Guha Nishad earlier that he was to spend fourteen years in the forest*1. Hence, Bharat promised the Lord that he would obey his commands and serve Ayodhya during this period. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, *1 = Doha no. 88.}

दो०. जेहिं उपाय पुनि पाय जनु देखै दीनदयाल ।

सो सिख देइअ अवधि लगि कोसलपाल कृपाल ॥ ३१३ ॥

dōhā.

jēhim upāya puni pāya janu dēkhai dīnadayāla.
sō sikha dē'i'a avadhi lagi kōsalapāla kṛpāla. 313.

Bharat continued: 'Oh merciful and compassionate Lord (dīnadayāla), by the means of which I may be able to see your holy feet once again at the end of the period, oh kind Lord of Ayodhya (kōsalapāla kṛpāla), please advise me accordingly.¹' (Doha no. 313)

[Note—¹Bharat has made two points expressly clear to Lord Ram—viz. (a) that he is willing to take charge of caring for the kingdom on the Lord's behalf only during the time the Lord has the mandate to stay in the forest as affirmed by him in the previous Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes this Doha; and (b) that the Lord must certainly return home at the end of this period as affirmed by him in the current Doha.

It also implied two other important things—viz. (a) that the Lord should not hesitate to return to Ayodhya at the end of fourteen years, as Bharat would be eagerly waiting to welcome him back, and (b) that Bharat would cease to be the caretaker at the end of the designated time frame, and then it would be Lord Ram's responsibility if anything went wrong due to his delay in returning home.

Lord Ram got the message clearly as would be evident later on in the story, for the Lord wasted no time in hastening home from Lanka at the end of the war because the time was running out*1, and at the same time Bharat too was getting very anxious because only one day was left before the time actually ended*2.

{Refer: *1 = Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 116 a-c.

*2 = Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1 and 8 that precede Doha no. 1.}]

चौ०. पुरजन परिजन प्रजा गोसाईं । सब सुचि सरस सनेहँ सगाईं ॥ १ ॥

राउर बदि भल भव दुख दाहू । प्रभु बिनु बादि परम पद लाहू ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

purajana parijana prajā gōsā'irṁ. saba suci sarasa sanēham' sagā'irṁ. 1.
rā'ura badi bhala bhava dukha dāhū. prabhu binu bādi parama pada lāhū. 2.

Bharat continued: 'Oh my revered Lord (gōsā'irṁ)! Everyone of the citizens, the members of the family, as well as the subjects of the kingdom in general, have an enduring bond of love and affection with thee, and this relationship is one of a personal nature that gives everyone joy, and a sense of kinship with thy majesty¹. (1)

Their sincere belief is that all the greatest of sufferings and their attendant torments in this world are worth enduring for thy sake, and in a similar way attainment of the greatest of achievements and successes in the world (that can give the greatest of joy, happiness, comfort and pleasure) are worthless². (2)

[Note—¹A similar idea has been narrated elsewhere in Ram Charit Manas. Refer to: (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 310 (citizens of Janakpur and Ayodhya); (b) Ayodhya Kand, (ii) Chaupai line nos. 3 and 6 that precede Doha no. 65 (Sita); (iii) Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 72 (Laxman); (iv) Doha no. 130 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it; (v) Doha no. 131 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it (sage Valmiki); (c) Aranya Kand, (vi) Chaupai line no. 21 that precedes Doha no. 11 (sage Sutikshan); (d) Uttar Kand, (vii) Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 47 (citizens of Ayodhya).

²This idea has been clearly expressed earlier too in the context of the reaction of the people at the time of Lord Ram departing from Ayodhya for the forest—apropos: openly in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 83—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 84.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 290—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 291.]

स्वामि सुजानु जानि सब ही की । रुचि लालसा रहनि जन जी की ॥ ३ ॥

प्रनतपालु पालिहि सब काहू । देउ दुहू दिसि ओर निबाहू ॥ ४ ॥

अस मोहि सब बिधि भूरि भरोसो । किँ बिकारु न सोचु खरो सो ॥ ५ ॥

svāmi sujānu jāni saba hī kī. ruci lālasā rahani jana jī kī. 3.
 pranatapālu pālihi saba kāhū. dē'u duhū disi ōra nibāhū. 4.
 asa mōhi saba bidhi bhūri bharōsō. ki'ēm' bicāru na sōcu kharō sō. 5.

Oh gracious Lord (svāmi)! Thou art wise and intelligent; thou knowest the inner emotions, feelings and thoughts of all thy servants, devotees and followers; and likewise thou art also aware of the yearnings and desires of my heart (because thou art all-knowing and omniscient). (3)

Thou art a protector and saviour of all those who submit themselves before thee and take refuge in thy holy feet. And therefore, thou havest taken care till now, and wouldst take care in the future also, of everyone from their beginning to their end, i.e. in this world as well as the world hereafter. (4)

This is my firm conviction and an inviolable belief, and therefore I completely and unquestionably rely on you and your judgment vis-à-vis my welfare and happiness.

This being the case, the more I think of it the more certainly I conclude that there is nothing left for me to worry about any more. (5)

[Note—Bharat essentially tells Lord Ram that his fate, his welfare and his happiness are all in the hands of the Lord. So therefore, whatever the Lord says would be obeyed by him—because he (Bharat) knows that the Lord can't do or say anything that would go against his interests, welfare and happiness.]

आरति मोर नाथ कर छोहू । दुहुँ मिलि कीन्ह ढीठु हठि मोहू ॥ ६ ॥
 यह बड़ दोषु दूर करि स्वामी । तजि सकोच सिखइअ अनुगामी ॥ ७ ॥
 भरत बिनय सुनि सबहिं प्रसंसी । खीर नीर बिबरन गति हंसी ॥ ८ ॥

ārati mōra nātha kara chōhū. duhum' mili kīnha ḍhīṭhu haṭhi mōhū. 6.
 yaha baṛa dōṣu dūri kari svāmī. taji sakōca sikha'i'a anugāmī. 7.
 bharata binaya suni sabahin prasansī. khīra nīra bibarana gati hansī. 8.

My excess of grief and distress, coupled with your excess of benevolence, grace and kindness upon me, has created a piquant situation that has caused much perplexity for me so much so that have become dazed and dumbfounded, for I am unable to think coherently and decide judiciously on anything myself¹. (6)

Oh my Lord (svāmī)! Please be kind to intervene and set right any wrong that I may have inadvertently done (because of the reasons I have outlined herein above).

So therefore, it is my earnest request to thee to leave aside any kind of hesitation and give me proper advice that thou thinkest fit and proper for me.² (7)

Everyone appreciated Bharat's prayers to Lord Ram; everyone hailed his politeness, humility and earnestness.

Bharat had the wisdom and the intellect that were exemplary, and it reminded one of a female swan (hansī) who has the innate ability to separate and drink pure milk from a sweet porridge made of milk and rice³. (8)

[Note—¹To wit, oh Lord, while my grief and sorrows at the prospect of separation from you, as well as the thoughts of the many sufferings you would have to endure in the forest due to me, push me to insist that you must return home, but your love and affection for me, your politeness and willingness to even break your own words given to our father just to honour my wishes, has moved me so profoundly that I feel ashamed of my self in trying to impose my own will upon you. It would be height of disrespect, impudence and impertinence on my part if I persist with my own agenda by neglecting your emotions. This situation has completely confounded me, making my mind numb so much that I am unable to think coherently and cogently.

²Bharat is reiterating once again what he had said earlier also during the first round of the conference—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 269 along with Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precede it.

³According to ancient lore, the swan has the unique ability of separating milk from water, or any other thing that is mixed with it. So, Bharat's intellect and wisdom were so refined that he could pick out the best out of the many options that were available, and the best option that he selected was to leave everything in the hands of Lord Ram after reminding the Lord of his reputation—that “the Lord takes care of everyone, he ensures their welfare in the present as well as in the future”. {Refer: Chaupai line no. 4 herein above.}]

दो०. दीनबंधु सुनि बंधु के बचन दीन छलहीन ।
देस काल अवसर सरिस बोले रामु प्रबीन ॥ ३१४ ॥

dōhā.

dīnabandhu suni bandhu kē bacana dīna chalahīna.
dēsa kāla avasara sarisa bōlē rāmu prabīna. 314.

When Lord Ram, who is a friend of the distressed and those who are suffering in any way (dīnabandhu), heard the words of his brother, words that earnest, sincere, and free of any sort of pretension, falsehood or deceit (chalahīna), words that were humble and marked by a sense of distress that Bharat was suffering from (dīna)—the Lord, who was wise, intelligent and prudent (rāmu prabīna), replied in a way that was appropriate under the prevailing circumstances by taking into consideration factors such as the place, the time and the occasion (dēsa kāla avasara sarisa)¹. (Doha no. 314)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precede Doha no. 304 where a similar narrative is given.]

चौ०. तात तुम्हारि मोरि परिजन की । चिंता गुरहि नृपहि घर बन की ॥ १ ॥
माथे पर गुर मुनि मिथिलेसू । हमहि तुम्हहि सपनेहुँ न कलेसू ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

tāta tumhāri mōri parijana kī. cintā gurahi nṛpahi ghara bana kī. 1.
māthē para gura muni mithilēsū. hamahi tumhahi sapanēhum'na kalēsū. 2.

Lord Ram told Bharat: ‘My dear (tāta)! The sage (Vasistha) and the king (Janak) think about the welfare and care of me, you, as well as all others in the family and the kingdom; the two are keep in mind the good and welfare of all of us, whether it be in our homes or in the forest.

[To wit, both Vasistha and Janak are always thinking about the well-being and good of all of us, whether we stay in our homes or venture out into the forest and other distant places of the realm.]¹ (1)

So therefore, with the exalted sage and the illustrious king having their protective hands on our heads to care for us and ensure our welfare and happiness, we, both you and me, cannot face the mischance of having to suffer from any kind of torment or misfortune.

[‘Listen Bharat,’ said Lord Ram, ‘both sage Vasistha and king Janak are wise, intelligent and prudent in every respect. They are experienced professionals in their respective fields, having full capabilities and expertise to take care of all exigencies, and meeting all sorts of emergencies that may arise. King Janak, who is benevolence personified, fills the void created by the death of our beloved father, king Dasrath, while sage Vasistha maintains the continuity that gives us the privilege of having an illustrious, wise and learned sage as our benefactor, advisor and teacher. With both of them sharing the joint responsibility of our welfare and happiness, what worries do we have in the world?’] (2)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 305 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede it.]

मोर तुम्हार परम पुरुषारथु । स्वारथु सुजसु धरमु परमारथु ॥ ३ ॥
पितु आयसु पालिहिं दुहु भाई । लोक बेद भल भूप भलाई ॥ ४ ॥
गुरु पितु मातु स्वामि सिख पालें । चलेहुँ कुमग पग परहिं न खालें ॥ ५ ॥

mōra tumhāra parama puruṣārathu. svārathu sujasu dharamu paramārathu.
3.

pitu āyasu pālihiṁ duhu bhā'īm. lōka bēda bhala bhūpa bhalā'īm. 4.
guru pitu mātu svāmi sikha pālēm. calēhum'kumaga paga parahim na
khālēm. 5.

It is a moral duty of both of us brothers, you as well as me, it is our joint responsibility and it is in the interest of both of us that we act jointly and share our common responsibilities in the present situation, as it would grant both of us equal fame, merit and eternal glory in the coming times of the era in which we live at present, as well as in all the future eras that would come henceforth. (3)

We should therefore obey our father's commands. Fulfilling this obligation would stand us in good stead, as we would be conforming to the principles of good and

meritorious conduct as espoused by the customs and traditions of the world and by the Vedas (scriptures), for such a conduct behooves good for a king and his future¹. (4)

[Lord Ram explains further why it is so important to follow the orders of one's parents, one's guru and one's master.] Verily indeed, by obeying the instructions of one's guru (teacher, moral preceptor), one's parents and one's master and lord, even if one goes the wrong way then still his steps would not go in vain (for sooner or later he will reap benefits of following their advice, because they would alert him and help him make a course correction before any danger actually arrives)². (5)

[Note—¹Lord Ram told Bharat: “Listen my dear brother! When we both follow the laws of Dharma (auspicious conduct and thought), it is natural that we both will get merit and fame. It would help us in the long run in running the affairs of the kingdom once things come back to normal routine—because we will get respect and obedience from our subjects; it would also give us world-wide fame and honour. Without making any effort, we both would become torch-bearers of Dharma. What otherwise may require special and strenuous efforts to achieve, would be ours so easily. So in a way, this so-called misfortune is a boon in disguise for us, for it has thrown before us an opportunity to prove to the world at large how much we two brothers love each other, how much we share our concerns, our responsibilities, our joys and sorrows with each other, how much is common between the two of us, and how we two brothers are one soul with two bodies! See my dearest Bharat, this is a golden opportunity for us, and we ought to grab it jointly with our hand.”

²Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 77; (b) Ayodhya Kand, (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 46; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 177; (iv) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 305—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 306.]

अस बिचारि सब सोच बिहाई । पालहु अवध अवधि भरि जाई ॥ ६ ॥
 देसु कोसु परिजन परिवारू । गुर पद रजहिं लाग छरुभारू ॥ ७ ॥
 तुम्ह मुनि मातु सचिव सिख मानी । पालेहु पुहुमि प्रजा रजधानी ॥ ८ ॥

asa bicāri saba sōca bihā'ī. pālahu avadha avadhi bhari jā'ī. 6.
 dēsu kōsu parijana parivārū. gura pada rajahim lāga charubhārū. 7.
 tumha muni mātu saciva sikha mānī. pālēhu puhumi prajā rajadhānī. 8.

Keeping this thought in your mind, you should discard all doubts and perplexities in this respect (as to what would should be done, as to what would happen because you are left alone to tackle the complexities of governing the kingdom, worrying uselessly that you will be alone to bear the brunt of the burden of misfortunes that have befallen on us, or about what would happen in the future, or that you might commit some mistake, and on and so forth endlessly, but in futility).

Hence, you must go and live up to your part of the responsibility of taking care of the kingdom and attending to its daily affairs for the designated period (of fourteen years while I am away). (6)

Remember Bharat this principle and advice of mine—the responsibility of taking care of the security and well-being of everything, such as the country, treasury, citizens and the family, is of our guru, sage Vasistha. So, place them (i.e. their responsibility) at the dust of the guru's holy feet (and become carefree).

[Tell the guru: “Oh Lord, I submit all responsibilities at your holy feet. I will act on your instructions on every matter, but it is you would be ultimately accountable for everything.”]¹ (7)

You must obey the advice of the sage (Vasistha), the queen mother (Kaushalya), and the ministers (led by the chief minister of the kingdom, Sumantra), and take care of the kingdom (the realm of Ayodhya), the subjects, and the capital city (of Ayodhya) in accordance with their advice.² (8)

[Note—¹Lord Ram has given an immense responsibility to sage Vasistha here, and jointly with king Janak as narrated in the previous verse no. 2 herein above.

One would not fail to mark this wisdom of the Lord—that he subtly told both of them, i.e. sage Vasistha and king Janak, that it is their joint duty to ensure everything runs smoothly in Ayodhya while he is away. They must remember that Bharat is a young and an inexperienced prince, and the governance of such a mighty kingdom as Ayodhya, which was a de-facto empire with extensive geographical areas under its domain, and having majesty, authority and power that much exceeded an ordinary kingdom, cannot be left in his hands. Therefore, should anything go wrong, both the sage and the king would be answerable to the world, and they would not be able to shrug it off by shifting the blame on Bharat.

Lord Ram's wise words also reassured Bharat that he need not worry at all on any count, as he has wise and experienced persons to help him on a day-to-day basis. He must free himself from getting perturbed by unnecessary and imaginary consternations and worries.

²In these verses, Lord Ram is reiterating what he had advised Bharat earlier too as narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 306.

The Lord was quietly warning Bharat that he should not repeat the mistake he had made earlier when this same group of well-wishers, the queen mother, the guru and the chief minister, had tried to prevail upon him to accept the crown, but Bharat had flatly refused to obey them. {Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 174—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 176.}

दो०. मुखिआ मुखु सो चाहिऐ खान पान कहूँ एक ।

पालइ पोषइ सकल अँग तुलसी सहित बिबेक ॥ ३१५ ॥

dōhā.

mukhi'ā mukhu sō cāhi'ai khāna pāna kahum'ēka.

pāla'i pōṣa'i sakala amṅa tulasī sahita bibēka. 315.

The leader should be a person who takes a lesson from the mouth of a person's body and behaves accordingly. The mouth is the only organ that the body employs to eat

and drink, but whatever the mouth eats and drinks goes to support and provide nourishment to all the organs of the body, with the mouth retaining nothing for itself¹. (Doha no. 315)

[Note—¹Once again, Lord Ram is reiterating a principle he has already espoused earlier in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 306. The significance this analogy and what it implies has been explained as a note appended to that verse.

To wit, Lord Ram tells Bharat that he should act like a trustee of the kingdom. Though he would be at the helm of affairs in a symbolic manner, but he must remember that he is meant to selflessly serve others who are dependent on him. He should not become greedy and hoard wealth at the cost of the subjects of the kingdom; he should ensure that the resources of the kingdom are used judiciously for the welfare of all. The relationship between a sovereign and his subjects is a symbiotic one, where one depends on the other for survival. A king is a ‘king’ only till the time there is a kingdom and its people support and respect him as their lord and master to whom they owe their allegiance. Otherwise he would lose his right to be called a true ‘king’, because then he would be treated as a tyrant who would be loathed by his own people. Sooner or later, such a reviled king would face the prospect of being ousted, politely or by force, and the title of a ‘king’ would be snatched from him, condemning him to a future where he would be forgotten and treated with contempt.]

चौ०. राजधरम सरबसु एतनोई । जिमि मन माहँ मनोरथ गोई ॥ १ ॥

बंधु प्रबोधु कीन्ह बहु भाँती । बिनु आधार मन तोषु न साँती ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

rājadharama sarabasu ētanōī. jimi mana māham’ manōratha gōī. 1.

bandhu prabōdhu kīnha bahu bhāmṭī. binu adhāra mana tōṣu na sāmṭī. 2.

Finally, Lord Ram told Bharat: ‘What I have told you herein above summarizes the essential principles that govern noble conduct befitting of a king. It is like some secret objective that a person would like to achieve when he starts an endeavour¹.’ (1)

In this aforesaid manner, Lord Ram tried to comfort his brother (Bharat) and reassure him in different ways, but the latter could not be sufficiently consoled or pacified in the absence of any tangible symbol or a memorabilia from Lord Ram that would sustain him and keep his emotions in check during the period of the Lord’s absence². (2)

[Note—¹Lord Ram is specifically referring to what he has advised Bharat in Doha no. 315 herein above.

In this context, it is worth remembering what Lord Ram told Laxman in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 71: “A king in whose reign the subjects are unhappy and tormented, such a king is worthy to be condemned to hell”.

Every king wants to acquire good name and reputation; he would like that his subjects honour him, are obedient to him, owe their allegiance to him, and are loyal to him. All these are possible if the king is benevolent, kind, considerate and merciful, if

he takes good care of his subjects, if he treats the kingdom's wealth as the wealth of the community and not his personal asset, ensuring that the fortunes of the kingdom are shared by all his subjects in equal measure, treating himself as merely a trustee on their behalf. A good king acts selflessly and judiciously; he does not become greedy and tyrannical. These virtues would definitely and unequivocally endear the king to his subjects. If that happens, surely he has no fear from revolt, or betrayal by anyone of his subjects who would favour one of his rival king from another kingdom. He would be honoured and hailed throughout the world. Else, he would be reviled while alive, and forgotten when dead.

²Bharat was so excessively distraught and heart-broken that mere talk would not soothe his tormented heart and injured emotions. He wanted something more tangible, some kind of memorabilia that would make him feel that Lord Ram is symbolically there with him, something he could look at in the memory of his beloved Lord whenever he wished to cry and vent his feelings, to lighten the burden of his heavy heart and calm his agitated nerves. He wanted to take back some physical symbol representing Lord Ram.]

भरत सील गुर सचिव समाजू । सकुच सनेह बिबस रघुराजू ॥ ३ ॥
प्रभु करि कृपा पाँवरीं दीन्हि । सादर भरत सीस धरि लीन्हि ॥ ४ ॥

bharata sīla gura saciva samājū. sakuca sanēha bibasa raghurājū. 3.
prabhu kari kṛpā pām̐varīm dīnhīm. sādara bharata sīsa dhari līnhīm. 4.

Lord Ram was very much moved by Bharat's emotions so much so that the Lord felt it impossible to deny what Bharat desired and was silently expressed by him¹ in the presence of the guru (sage Vasistha), the ministers and others attending the conference. (3)

The Lord obliged Bharat by graciously giving the latter his own wooden sandals, which Bharat accepted with the greatest of reverence by lifting the sandals and placing them on his head². (4)

[Note—¹This refers to Bharat's desire to take some memorabilia of Lord Ram back with him to Ayodhya as mentioned in verse no. 2 herein above.

²A question now arises: from where did this pair of sandals come in the context of Lord Ram walking barefoot on the path to the forest, something that is clear from what Bharat himself says in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand: (i) Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precede Doha no. 203; (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 262.

Well, the answer is this: At the time of departure from Ayodhya for Chitrakoot, Bharat had ordered that all things necessary for the anointment of Lord as a king should be taken along so that he would ensure that the Lord's anointment as the king of Ayodhya is done in the forest itself, without delay—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 187.

Now, a king would not walk 'barefoot'! So obviously, alongside other paraphernalia for making Lord Ram as the next king, a pair of wooden sandals was also brought to Chitrakoot. It was this pair that Bharat first offered to Lord Ram to

wear as a token of his accepting to become a king, and then the Lord returned the pair of sandals to Bharat which he took back to Ayodhya when he returned from Chitrakoot.

If we read verse no. 3 herein above carefully and analyse it, this event can be deduced clearly, because when Bharat offered Lord Ram the pairs of sandals, the Lord found it hard to refuse to wear them for some moments as everyone was watching him, and it would seem extremely harsh on his part to refuse to do something as simple as wearing a pair of sandals for a moment just to please Bharat, knowing fully well that this wearing of the sandals had only a symbolic value and nothing more, for it would not alter any fact or change the situation at all in practical terms. So, Lord Ram put on the pair of sandals before returning them to Bharat.

Refer also to Valmiki's Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, Canto 112, verse no. 22 where we read that Bharat offered to Lord Ram a pair of wooden sandals encrusted in gold and asked the Lord to put it on. The Lord wore the sandals for a moment, and then returned them to Bharat to fulfill his desire to take something tangible back to Ayodhya as a token or a memorabilia of Lord Ram.

A similar event is narrated in Veda Vyas' "Adhyatma Ramayan", Ayodhya Kand, Canto 9, verse nos. 49-50 where we read that Bharat offered a pair of sandals to Lord Ram and asked the Lord to give it back to him, for he would put it on the throne of the kingdom in lieu of the Lord, and take care of the affairs of the kingdom till the time the Lord returns.]

चरनपीठ करुनानिधान के । जनु जुग जामिक प्रजा प्रान के ॥ ५ ॥
संपुट भरत सनेह रतन के । आखर जुग जनु जीव जतन के ॥ ६ ॥

caranapīṭha karunānidhāna kē. janu juga jāmika prajā prāna kē. 5.
samputa bharata sanēha ratana kē. ākhara juga janu jīva jatana kē. 6.

The two pieces of the sandals of Lord Ram (caranapīṭha)¹, who was a treasury of the glorious virtues of mercy, compassion and kindness (karunānidhāna), were like two guards that would stand to safeguard the life (and happiness) of the citizens of Ayodhya. (5)

These two pieces of Lord Ram's sandals were like a golden box or a casket that would safely keep the jewel represented by Bharat's love and affection for the Lord².

They were also representatives of the two letters of Lord Ram's holy Mantra (Rā + Ma) which ensures a living being's spiritual welfare³. (6)

[Note—¹The word used for the two pieces of sandals is "caranapīṭha". The word has to components—viz. "carana"—meaning feet, and "pīṭha" meaning a seat that is exclusively used by someone of a high stature. Now, since these sandals were meant for the exclusive use of Lord Ram, they were revered as a symbol exclusive to the Lord; no other person would use it. Hence, Bharat and everyone else would treat this pair of sandals as Lord Ram's token presence in Ayodhya. By putting them on the throne, it would be deemed that the Lord is sitting on the throne himself.

²A jewel box or a casket has two parts—one in which the jewel is actually kept, and the other that acts as a lid to cover the jewel and keep it safely so that no other person can touch it or take it away or steal it.

It is meant here that Bharat's love and devotion for Lord Ram would be entrusted to these two pieces of the Lord's sandals in a symbolic way to ensure that Bharat remains safe and secure till the time the Lord comes back.

³Lord Ram's holy name, consisting of the two letters (Rā + Ma), is a divine Mantra (a spiritual formula) that a person uses to attain his spiritual goals. The glory of the two letters of the Lord's holy name has been narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 20 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it; (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 23.

Now, while the two pieces of sandals would protect Bharat as he would have direct access to them, the two letters of Lord Ram's name would protect even those who do not have this privilege, for everyone can say the Lord's name and reap a similar benefit.

Remember: The sandals would be placed on the throne of the kingdom to represent Lord Ram's physical presence there in a symbolic manner, so obviously an ordinary citizen won't have direct access to them. So therefore, an easy solution was offered to the common person—and it was to remember the Lord and utter his holy name as much as possible during the course of their lives as a means to keep them close to the Lord and live under the shadow of his benevolence and protective shield.]

कुल कपाट कर कुसल करम के । बिमल नयन सेवा सुधरम के ॥ ७ ॥
भरत मुदित अवलंब लहे तें । अस सुख जस सिय रामु रहे तें ॥ ८ ॥

kula kapāṭa kara kusala karama kē. bimala nayana sēvā sudharama kē. 7.
bharata mudita avalamba lahē tēm. asa sukha jasa siya rāmu rahē tēm. 8.

Moreover, these two sandals would act as a pair of doors to protect the honour and dignity of the illustrious family of king Raghu (kula kapāṭa)¹; they would be like a pair of hands that a person uses to do good and meritorious deeds (kara kusala karama kē)²; and they would also be like a pair of eyes of wisdom (bimala nayana) that show a person the noble path of doing service (sēvā) as well as the auspicious path of Dharma (sudharama kē)³. (7)

Bharat therefore immediately accepted these auspicious pair of sandals of Lord Ram, feeling very cheerful as if the two pieces of the sandals represented Lord Ram and Sita themselves, and as if both of them (Lord Ram and Sita) are going back to Ayodhya with him (to fulfill his wishes to take them back). (8)

[Note—¹By putting the two sandals of Lord Ram on the throne, all doubts as to who would be the next king will be put to rest, and this would protect the honour of the family because it has been a tradition amongst great kingdoms that the eldest son should ascend the throne. It would also ensure that no one else would eye the throne in the absence of Lord Ram, and no one would dare to play dirty tricks behind the curtain to grab the reign of the kingdom. How can one be sure of it? Well, the answer is simple and straightforward—everyone loves Lord Ram, everyone wants him to be

crowned a king, so therefore when his sandals are placed on the throne to represent him, no one would even think of something nasty as he would know that he would have no support from anyone else in the kingdom. A vacant throne may provoke greed to grab it, but when the throne is occupied, no one would dare to oppose the reigning monarch.

²The two sandals would remind everyone, including Bharat and his younger brother Shatrughan, to always do good deeds and refrain from anything that is not right. If the ruling king is good and follows the path of Dharma, his subjects follow his example. Since the sandals represent Lord Ram, who is an embodiment of the best of virtues and values, it is but natural that the citizens would always do things which the Lord would approve.

³This is a reiteration of what Lord Ram has told Bharat regarding the duties of a king, a master or a lord vis-à-vis his servants in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 306; and (ii) Doha no. 315 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precede it, and Chaupai line no. 1 that follow it.

The main emphasis is on ‘service’ that is done in ‘accordance to the principles of Dharma’. This principle applies to both the king and his subjects. A king should serve his subjects selflessly, and treat them with kindness and empathy, looking after their welfare and ploughing the resources of the kingdom back for their well-being. The subjects on their part are to serve the king affectionately, loyally and honestly, looking up to him as their guardian and well-wisher.]

दो०. मागेउ बिदा प्रनामु करि राम लिए उर लाइ ।
लोग उचाटे अमरपति कुटिल कुअवसरु पाइ ॥ ३१६ ॥

dōhā.

māgē'u bidā pranāmu kari rāma li'ē ura lā'i.
lōga ucāṭē amarapati kuṭila ku'avasaru pā'i. 316.

As Bharat finally bowed his head before Lord Ram and asked his permission to depart for home, the Lord lifted him and clasped him to his bosom.

Meanwhile, the malevolent king of the immortals (“amarapati”; i.e. Indra, the king of gods), finding an opportunity in this situation, threw a veil of weariness and gloom on the people, making them forlorn and emotionally numbed¹ so much that none would say anything, and all would succumb to the will of fate². (Doha no. 316)

[Note—¹In this context, refer to the next set of verses, i.e. Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that follow herein below.

²Indra decided not to lose this chance and strike now when Bharat was seeking Lord Ram’s permission to return home. So, the selfish king of gods cunningly cast a cloud of gloom and weariness on the people to ensure that no one objected to returning home. As a result, the people, who had by this time lost all hopes of Lord Ram going back with them, accepted their fate with a lowered head, like an army conceding defeat, and silently packed up to trudge back to Ayodhya. The heaviness of their heart, the numbness of their emotions and the inability of their minds to think of

anything would be evident shortly when we read the narrative of how they wended their way back to Ayodhya.

The conference that was held in Chitrakoot has also been beautifully described elsewhere by Tulsidas—refer: his book “Geetawali Ramayan”, Ayodhya Kand, verse nos. 69-75.]

चौ०. सो कुचालि सब कहँ भइ नीकी । अवधि आस सम जीवनि जी की ॥ १ ॥

नतरु लखन सिय राम बियोगा । हहरि मरत सब लोग कुरोगा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sō kucālī saba kaham̐ bha'i nīkī. avadhi āsa sama jīvani jī kī. 1.

nataru lakhana siya rāma biyōgā. hahari marata saba lōga kurōgā. 2.

However (by the grace of Lord Ram), this mischief of Indra (which he perpetrated with the sole purpose of making the people return home without further delay) proved to be a boon-in-disguise for everyone, as it would help them to remember Lord Ram and repeat his holy name at all the moments of their lives as they pass the remaining years of the period (of fourteen years) in the cherished hope to see their beloved Lord once again¹. (1)

The numbness of the senses of the people that was caused by the evil mechanism of Indra, leading to their docile submission to the fiat of fate and the provisions of providence over which no one has any control, proved, however, to be a life-saviour for the people, for otherwise they would have died in distress caused by the shock of extreme grief due to their separation from Lord Ram and Laxman.

[To wit, Indra's selfish mechanism, that caused the people to have a forlorn and indifferent mood marked by weariness, gloom, despondency and hopelessness regarding the situation, appeared to be like a dark cloud that covered the sky over them, but in practice it actually proved, by the grace of Lord Ram, to be a sort of blessing for the people, because it numbed their senses so much that they were unable think and react, meekly accepting their fate with a bowed head. Though it was so tragic, but a ray of hope lay at the other end of the dark tunnel, for the citizens now pinned their hope on the day when the period of fourteen years would end, and Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman would return home.]² (2)

[Note—¹In this context, refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 86 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it; (ii) Doha no. 322 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it.

The people would spend their time remembering the Lord, talking about him, and thinking of him. This would act as buoy to help them cross the ocean of grief which would have otherwise drowned them. It would be a sort of expression of their devotion for Lord Ram whom each single person of Ayodhya and Janakpur loved more than his or her life. Constant remembrance of the Lord would be meditation put into practice, along with its attendant rewards.

Otherwise, there was the dreadful prospect of people dying due to constant and excess of exposure to grief and mental agony caused by their forceful separation from the Lord they loved intensely.

It is a matter of common observance that when a person is separated from someone whom he loves very much, his mind and heart, his thoughts and emotions would always be centered on his beloved who is far away from him. Physical distance helps to intensify love manifold times as compared to physical nearness of two persons who are emotionally attached to each other. Hence, the physical distance between Lord Ram and Bharat on one hand, and the Lord's subjects on the other hand proved to be boon rather than a disadvantage for everyone concerned, as they would now spend all their time thinking of Lord Ram, talking about him, and remaining submerged in a lake representing the sweetness of his memory. Distance only helps to make true love and affection more robust instead of causing it to fade away.

This opportunity would also help to judge how much the people, including Bharat, loved and adored Lord Ram. The period of fourteen years would act like a 'test of time', a litmus test to prove whether the affection shown by the people to Lord Ram during the initial phases of his going to the forest was something temporary and transient, something provoked by sympathy for him because he was denied the crown, or if it was something deep and enduring and everlasting.

²Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, line no. 2 of Doha no. 316 herein above.]

रामकृपाँ अवेरेब सुधारी । बिबुध धारि भइ गुनद गोहारी ॥ ३ ॥
भेंटत भुज भरि भाइ भरत सो । राम प्रेम रसु कहि न परत सो ॥ ४ ॥

rāmakṛpām̐avarēba sudhārī. bibudha dhārī bha'i gunada gōhārī. 3.
bhēṇṭata bhuja bhari bhā'i bharata sō. rāma prēma rasu kahi na parata sō. 4.

Verily indeed and in all sooth, by the grace, compassion and benevolence of Lord Ram (rāmakṛpām̐), the adversity that normally would have caused immense torment to the people (at the mental, emotional and physical plains), was however turned around, and made soothing and bearable for the people.

The sharpness of the evil mechanism employed by the gods (to force the people to leave Lord Ram alone and go back to their homes), whereby the senses of the people were numbed and they lost the power to think and react, meekly submitting to their fate as if some anesthetic medicine had been given to them, actually became an ally for the people, as it helped them survive the shock of the tragedy and override the dreadful prospects they would have otherwise faced¹. (3)

The moment when Lord Ram spread his arms wide to embrace his dear brother Bharat and clasp him to his bosom was so momentous and completely soaked in the virtues of love and affection that it is not possible to describe it in words.

[This is because words have their limitations, and they cannot express the depth and the expanse as well as the nectarine sweetness of the love and affection that existed between the two brothers, and which poured out of their hearts like a heaving ocean breaching its dykes and running all over its shores.]² (4)

[Note—¹The observation made in this verse is an extension of what has been said in verse nos. 1-2 herein above. The dreadful prospect is mentioned in verse no. 2 herein above—and it is 'death' out of shock and grief.

²Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 240—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 241.

These soulful moments when Lord Ram and Bharat were bidding good-bye to each other has been very beautifully, and in a heart-touching way, narrated in Tulsidas' book "Geetawali Ramayan", Ayodhya Kand, verse nos. 76-78.]

तन मन बचन उमग अनुरागा । धीर धुरंधर धीरजु त्यागा ॥ ५ ॥
बारिज लोचन मोचत बारी । देखि दसा सुर सभा दुखारी ॥ ६ ॥

tana mana bacana umaga anurāgā. dhīra dhurandhara dhīraju tyāgā. 5.
bārija lōcana mōcata bārī. dēkhi dasā sura sabhā dukhārī. 6.

The two brothers were ecstatic and extremely thrilled as if the nectar of the virtues of love and affection spilled out from their hearts and overflowed their whole being, drenching their bodies, their minds and hearts, and their words (as they sobbed and encouraged each other to have patience and resilience so as to face and get over the adverse time).

The Lord, who was resolute and an embodiment of firmness, courage, patience and resilience, was so immensely moved and became so intensely emotional that he lost restraint over himself (and began to weep). (5)

Tears ran out of the lotus-like eyes of Lord Ram. Watching this, the community of gods felt very sad and remorseful (regretting that the Lord had to suffer so much for their sake). (6)

मुनिगन गुर धुर धीर जनक से । ग्यान अनल मन कसें कनक से ॥ ७ ॥
जे बिरंचि निरलेप उपाए । पदुम पत्र जिमि जग जल जाए ॥ ८ ॥

munigana gura dhura dhīra janaka sē. gyāna anala mana kasēm kanaka sē.
7.
jē birañci niralēpa upā'ē. paduma patra jimi jaga jala jā'ē. 8.

The emotional condition of Lord Ram and how he was affected by Bharat's love for him, especially in the context of the impending separation from him, had a profound impact on those who were watching the Lord—such as the sages who had assembled there, the guru (sage Vasistha) as well as king Janak, all of whom were enlightened and well steeped in knowledge of the scriptures as well as the principles of renunciation, detachment and dispassion so much so that their wisdom and level of knowledge can be compared to the gold standard. (7)

They were by birth and their very nature wise and enlightened, practicing renunciation, detachment and dispassion to remain pure and unaffected by the world surrounding them, just like the petals of a lotus flower remain unaffected by the water of the pond where it grows¹. (8)

[Note—¹The metaphor of the lotus flower is used to imply purity and the virtue of being able to remain unaffected by one's surroundings. This is because the dirty water of the pond has no effect on the petals of the lotus as the water does not stick to them.

Sages, Vasistha and king Janak were highly enlightened and self-restraint people; they practiced the virtues of renunciation, detachment and dispassion themselves. But even they could not control themselves and became highly emotional when they saw how Lord Ram and Bharat were grieving at the prospect of separation from one another.]

दो०. तेउ बिलोकि रघुबर भरत प्रीति अनूप अपार ।

भए मगन मन तन बचन सहित बिराग बिचार ॥ ३१७ ॥

dōhā.

tē'u bilōki raghubara bharata prīti anūpa apāra.

bha'e magana mana tana bacana sahita birāga bicāra. 317.

Even such wise and enlightened persons (mentioned previously in the verses that precede this Doha, and who were like a gold standard vis-à-vis the virtues of renunciation, detachment and dispassion) became struck by grief and sadness which was evident in their expressions, in the way their minds, hearts and bodies reacted, and in the words they spoke when they observed the intensity, the immensity, the purity and the depth of unparallel love and affection that existed between Lord Ram and Bharat.

[To wit, even such enlightened persons forgot for a moment that they ought to remain neutral and unaffected by what they see in the external world, for they too became emotionally overwhelmed as they failed to control themselves.] (Doha no. 317)

चौ०. जहाँ जनक गुर गति मति भोरी । प्राकृत प्रीति कहत बड़ि खोरी ॥ १ ॥

बरनत रघुबर भरत बियोगू । सुनि कठोर कबि जानिहि लोगू ॥ २ ॥

सो सकोच रसु अकथ सुबानी । समउ सनेहु सुमिरि सकुचानी ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

jahām' janaka gura gati mati bhōrī. prākṛta prīti kahata baḍi khōrī. 1.

baranata raghubara bharata biyōgū. suni kaṭhōra kabi jānihi lōgū. 2.

sō sakōca rasu akatha subānī. sama'u sanēhu sumiri sakucānī. 3.

The affection and love that existed between the two brothers (Lord Ram and Bharat) was of such a refined, divine and sublime nature that it had mesmerized and left spellbound the mind and the heart of such wise, enlightened and illustrious persons as king Janak and sage Vasistha, for even they could not entirely fathom its depth and spiritual dimension.

This being the case, to give a worldly connotation or a worldly dimension to the sort of love and affection that existed between the two brothers would be an extremely erroneous thing to do, for it was of a transcendental nature that goes beyond the mundane and grossness of the physical world. (1)

Verily, if a poet or bard, no matter how learned, competent, resolute, dispassionate and professional he may be (for a scribe ought to be neutral while describing any episode), attempts to describe the intensity of grief of separation that affected both Lord Ram and Bharat during those poignant moments (when Bharat sought permission from the Lord to depart, and the two brothers embraced each other tightly and sobbed uncontrollably as if this development was virtually tearing apart a soul into two halves)— then the world would frown upon such a poet and call him stone-hearted (or one who is without any emotions and feelings), for otherwise he should have been so moved emotionally himself that he could not have gathered his wits sufficiently together to find words to narrate an episode that is so intensely sad and heartrending that it virtually pounds the heart of the listener so hard as to break all his sense of resilience, patience, dispassion and neutrality¹. (2)

[Note—¹To wit, the world would accuse a poet, who attempts to describe those poignant moments of separation of Bharat and Lord Ram, as being stern-hearted, or as being heartless completely, for otherwise he would have wept and sobbed so much himself that he would have had no time or an inclination to think of anything at all, far less of finding words to narrate it as if he was not at all affected by the developments.

In essence, Tulsidas says that he is incapable of saying anything further in the matter because he is overcome by grief himself. He does not want to be accused of being heartless, and of being a mere professional scribe who remains unaffected by the developments around him, for the fact is that he (Tulsidas) is a very emotional person who is completely devoted to Lord Ram, one who loves the Lord more than anything or anyone in this world.

He is deeply touched by the sight of Bharat and Lord Ram embracing each other at the time of their separation so much so that it is better for him if the world calls him an incompetent poet because he did not, or could not, describe those moments, than to give a narration that would not do justice to those moments, a narration that would fail to bring out the depth and the purity and the sweetness and the sublimity of the nectarine love and affection that existed between Lord Ram and Bharat, for it was not of a worldly plane, but of a transcendental and subtle nature marked by divinity, sublimity, purity and holiness.

It was reminiscent of the bond of love that exists naturally between the Supreme Soul (represented by Lord Ram) and the individual creature's soul (represented by Bharat).

Hence, Tulsidas says that he prefers to cut it short so as to be able to exercise control over his mind, regain his poise, and move on with the narration of the main story.

In this context, refer to Geetawali Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, verse no. 78, stanza no. 4.]

भेंटि भरतु रघुबर समुझाए । पुनि रिपुदवनु हरषि हियँ लाए ॥ ४ ॥

सेवक सचिव भरत रुख पाई । निज निज काज लगे सब जाई ॥ ५ ॥

सुनि दारुन दुखु दुहूँ समाजा । लगे चलन के साजन साजा ॥ ६ ॥

bhēṇṭi bharatu raghubara samujhā'ē. puni ripudavanu haraṣi hiyaṁ' lā'ē. 4.
sēvaka saciva bharata rukha pā'ī. nija nija kāja lagē saba jā'ī. 5.

sunī dārūna dukhu duhūṃ samājā. lagē calana kē sājana sājā. 6.

Lord Ram met Bharat most affectionately, comforting and reassuring him in different ways.

Then the Lord lovingly clasped Shatrughan (ripudavanu) to his bosom. (4)

Meanwhile, seeing the intention of Bharat (that he wants everyone to get ready for departure), the attendants and the ministers engaged themselves in making preparations accordingly. (5)

As soon as the word spread that the time of departure has finally arrived, a wave of sadness and gloom overwhelmed the grief-stricken people of the two camps (of Ayodhya and Janakpur) even as they wearily packed up and made themselves ready for the long-haul journey back home¹. (6)

[Note—¹This is in sharp contrast to the joyous mood and the enthusiasm that prevailed at the time when the people of Ayodhya were getting ready to depart for Chitrakoot—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 185—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 188.

The mood now was gloomy, sad and despondent. It seemed as if an army was going back after suffering defeat in the battle-field. We shall read shortly herein below how the people sullenly trudged their way home with a heavy heart and a lowered head, sighing and feeling remorseful as if they have lost everything, and the only thread that helped them cling to life was the hope of seeing their beloved Lord once again at the end of the fourteen year period.]

प्रभु पद पदुम बंदि दोउ भाई । चले सीस धरि राम रजाई ॥ ७ ॥
मुनि तापस बनदेव निहोरी । सब सनमानि बहोरि बहोरी ॥ ८ ॥

prabhu pada paduma bandi dō'u bhā'ī. calē sīsa dhari rāma rajā'ī. 7.
muni tāpasa banadēva nihōrī. saba sanamāni bahōri bahōrī. 8.

The two brothers (Bharat and Shatrughan) paid their obeisance at the lotus-like feet of Lord Ram, and then they departed after having received Lord Ram's permission which they accepted by bowing their heads as if literally keeping the Lord's instructions on their heads. (7)

The two brothers paid their respects to the sages and ascetics present on the occasion, as well as to the patron deities of the forest. They repeatedly offered their respects to them all. (8)

दो०. लखनहि भेंटि प्रनामु करि सिर धरि सिय पद धूरि ।
चले सप्रेम असीस सुनि सकल सुमंगल मूरि ॥ ३१८ ॥
dōhā.

lakhanahi bhēṇṭi pranāmu kari sira dhari siya pada dhūri.
calē saprēma asīsa suni sakala sumaṅgala mūri. 318.

Then the two brothers met Laxman very affectionately, and bowed their heads before Sita and picked up the dust of her feet and placed it on their heads.

Hearing that Sita has blessed them affectionately, a blessing that was like the root of all auspiciousness for them, the two brothers finally departed from there (for their journey back home to Ayodhya)¹. (Doha no. 318)

[Note—¹When Bharat and Shatrughan were blessed by Sita, they felt exceedingly happy as it was a signal that she harboured no hard feelings against them.

In this context refer also to the moment when Bharat had met Sita after arriving at Chitrakoot where it is clearly said that when the two brothers observed that Sita had received them with warmth and affection, they felt very happy, and all their secret doubts, worries and fears were dispelled—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-6 that precede Doha no. 242.]

चौ०. सानुज राम नृपहि सिर नाई । कीन्हि बहुत बिधि बिनय बड़ाई ॥ १ ॥
देव दया बस बड़ दुखु पायउ । सहित समाज काननहिं आयउ ॥ २ ॥
पुर पगु धारिअ देइ असीसा । कीन्ह धीर धरि गवनु महीसा ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

sānuja rāma nr̥pahi sira nā'ī. kīnhi bahuta bidhi binaya barā'ī. 1.
dēva dayā basa barā dukhu pāya'u. sahita samāja kānanahim āya'u. 2.
pura pagu dhāri'a dē'i asīsā. kīnha dhīra dhari gavanu mahīsā. 3.

Lord Ram, along with his younger brother (Laxman), bowed his head before king Janak, honouring and praying to him in a variety of ways. (1)

The Lord told Janak: 'Oh your Majesty and honourable Lord (dēva)! You have had to suffer a lot of hardships out of your compassionate nature, for you had taken the trouble of coming to this faraway forest due to your kind and gracious nature (and your natural affection for us). (2)

Now please be kind to bless us and return to your city (of Janakpur).'

Hearing Lord Ram's polite submission, the king patiently blessed him and departed from there. (3)

मुनि महिदेव साधु सनमाने । बिदा किए हरि हर सम जाने ॥ ४ ॥
सासु समीप गए दोउ भाई । फिरे बंदि पग आसिष पाई ॥ ५ ॥

muni mahidēva sādhu sanamānē. bidā ki'ē hari hara sama jānē. 4.
sāsu samīpa ga'ē dō'u bhā'ī. phirē bandi paga āsiṣa pā'ī. 5.

Then the Lord offered his respects to the sages, Brahmins and other saintly souls who had come to Chitrakoot to meet him (as part of Bharat's and Janak's entourage), treating them as being equivalent to Lords Hari and Har (Lord Vishnu and Lord Shiva respectively), and bid them farewell. (4)

Then the two brothers (Lord Ram and Laxman) went near their mother-in-law (i.e. queen Sunayana, wife of king Janak), and after paying their respects to her, they returned. (5)

कौसिक बामदेव जाबाली । पुरजन परिजन सचिव सुचाली ॥ ६ ॥
जथा जोगु करि बिनय प्रनामा । बिदा किए सब सानुज रामा ॥ ७ ॥
नारि पुरुष लघु मध्य बड़ेरे । सब सनमानि कृपानिधि फेरे ॥ ८ ॥

kausika bāmadēva jābālī. purajana parijana saciva sucālī. 6.
jathā jōgu kari binaya pranāmā. bidā ki'ē saba sānuja rāmā. 7.
nāri puruṣa laghu madhya baṛērē. saba sanamāni kṛpānidhi phērē. 8.

Sages Kaushik (Vishwamitra), Vamdeo and Jabali¹, as well as all the other citizens, family members, the ministers, and all other good people who had come to Chitrakoot to meet the Lord (as part of the entourage that accompanied Bharat and king Janak) --
- [6]

--- Lord Ram and his younger brother (Laxman) met every one of them very respectfully, and took leave of them individually [7]. (6-7)

In fact, the two brothers met every single person, all the males and the females of all statures and positions in the society, whether they were low down in the social hierarchy or occupied a middle rung or were high up in the order, whether they were young or old.

Then, Lord Ram, who was a fountainhead of compassion, mercy and kindness (kṛpānidhi), showed due respect to everyone he met², as he requested them to return home. (8)

[Note—¹Here we come across two other sages for the first time—viz. Vamdeo and Jabali. They had joined king Janak along with sage Vishwamitra while the king was on his way to Chitrakoot.

²It is a remarkable thing to note that Lord Ram and Laxman met each person individually, irrespective of who they were and what position they occupied in the order of things in social hierarchy. This particular nature of Lord Ram was what endeared him to the citizens and the world at large.

We have already read that when the party accompanying Bharat had arrived at Chitrakoot, Lord Ram met everyone individually to honour each one of them—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 244.

Once again, we shall read later on that when Lord Ram returned to Ayodhya at the end of the fourteen year period, he will once again meet each single person who

came to receive him—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 6.]

दो०. भरत मातु पद बंदि प्रभु सुचि सनेहँ मिलि भेंटि ।
बिदा कीन्ह सजि पालकी सकुच सोच सब मेटि ॥ ३१९ ॥

dōhā.

bharata mātū pada bandi prabhu suci sanēham' mili bhēṇṭi.
bidā kīnha saji pālakī sakuca sōca saba mēṭi. 319.

Lord Ram met Bharat's mother (Kaikeyi) with purity of affection for her, and while paying his respects at her feet he talked with her most politely and dispelled all misgivings in her heart. After that, the Lord took special care to seat her on a decorated palanquin and bid her good bye after reassuring her that there is no cause for any misunderstanding, doubts and feeling remorseful¹. (Doha no. 319)

[Note—¹This—Lord Ram meeting Kaikeyi affectionately—is a very interesting episode; it proves that the Lord treated Kaikeyi with full dignity and honours inspite of her being loathed by the rest of the world. In fact, the Lord owed thanks to her for being ready to accept a bundle of ignominy on her head just to ensure that the Lord could fulfill his divine mandate of eliminating the demons by going to the forest.

Verily indeed, had Lord Ram not been forced to go to the forest by Kaikeyi, we would not have had the privilege of reading a magnificent story that came to be known as the “Ramayana”. The glory of Lord Ram and the excellence of his character were given a polish and a sheen, and made to shine with a radiance that they certainly deserve, because he had left Ayodhya and successfully accomplished the most difficult task of eliminating the scourge of the demons. In between, countless souls had found their spiritual fulfillment, and countless sages, hermits, ascetics and devotees had been blessed, and the earth with its so many components and facets, such as the birds and animals, the trees, the rivers, the mountains, the valleys, et al, had had the privilege of seeing the Supreme Being and enjoy his holy presence amidst them, even touching the Lord's feet if they could, as he wended barefoot through the paths leading to remote lands, as far away as Lanka across the ocean.

In the story of the Ram Charit Manas we come across occasions when Lord Ram had first met Kaikeyi before meeting even his own mother Kaushalya. Refer: (a) Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 244 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it (at the time of arrival of Bharat at Chitrakoot); and (b) Baal Kand, (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 10 (at the time of the Lord's return to Ayodhya).

This particular episode of Lord Ram meeting Kaikeyi and reassuring her affectionately not to worry or feel guilty in any way, at the time of departure of Bharat back to Ayodhya, has also been described in Veda Vyas' “Adhyatma Ramayan”, Ayodhya Kand, Canto 9, verse nos. 55-69. In this narration, Lord Ram has clearly told Kaikeyi not to feel remorseful for being the cause of sending the Lord to the forest, because it was all done on the Lord's own instructions, and it was in accordance with his own wish—verse nos. 63-64.]

चौ०. परिजन मातु पितहि मिलि सीता । फिरी प्रानप्रिय प्रेम पुनीता ॥ १ ॥

करि प्रनामु भेंटों सब सासू । प्रीति कहत कबि हियँ न हुलासू ॥ २ ॥
 सुनि सिख अभिमत आसिष पाई । रही सीय दुहु प्रीति समाई ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

parijana mātu pitahi mili sītā. phirī prānapriya prēma punītā. 1.
 kari pranāmu bhēṇṭīm saba sāsū. prīti kahata kabi hiyaṁ na hulāsū. 2.
 suni sikha abhimata āsiṣa pāī. rahī siya duhu prīti samāī. 3.

Meanwhile, Sita also met her parents and close relatives (who had accompanied king Janak) to take leave of them, and then she returned to where her beloved husband (Lord Ram) was. (1)

Then she met her mothers-in-law (Kaushalya and others) who embraced her. Their mutual love and affection was so great that the poet (i.e. Tulsidas himself) finds that his heart does not support him if he wants to describe it (i.e. he finds himself unable to do so). (2)

Sita stood transfixed for a while as she heard the wise advice that her mothers-in-law gave her¹, as well as by the immensity of love they showed towards her.

[To wit, for some moments, Sita could not move. She listened attentively to the advice her mothers-in-law gave her, and also their love for her made her immobile because she would miss them for a long time now onwards.] (3)

[Note—¹It is easy to imagine what many things Sita's mothers-in-law may have advised her. For instance, they must have told her to have courage and never lose hope, never to falter and fall prey to adversities, never shy away from serving Lord Ram to the best of her ability, and to treat Laxman as her son. They must have also told her some general things about how to cope with life in a forest, what to do in cases of emergency, and so on and so forth. Surely this must have taken some time, and so Sita stood listening to them in rapt attention. During this discourse, the mothers-in-law must have embraced Sita repeatedly, moved their loving hands over her head and caressed her like a mother would do to her daughter when she is going away from the former.

In this context, refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 69.

Amongst the many things the mothers-in-law may have said to Sita was also the advice about the way a loyal wife should live. This sort of advice that they gave Sita finds a reflection in what Anusuiya, wife of sage Atri, would tell her in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 5 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-19 that precede it.]

रघुपति पटु पालकीं मगाई । करि प्रबोधु सब मातु चढ़ाई ॥ ४ ॥
 बार बार हिलि मिलि दुहु भाई । सम सनेहँ जननी पहुँचाई ॥ ५ ॥
 साजि बाजि गज बाहन नाना । भरत भूप दल कीन्ह पयाना ॥ ६ ॥

raghupati paṭu pālakīm magāīm. kari prabōdhu saba mātu caṛhāīm. 4.
 bāra bāra hili mili duhu bhāīm. sama sanēham janani pahumcāīm. 5.

sāji bāji gaja bāhana nānā. bharata bhūpa dala kīnha payānā. 6.

Lord Ram (“raghupati”; the Lord of the illustrious family descending from the ancient king named Raghu) called for beautiful palanquins that had curtains drawn across their windows (paṭu pālākīm), and then comforting all his mothers with soothing words, the Lord made them mount the palanquins. (4)

The two brothers (Lord Ram and Laxman) met each of the mothers personally, showing them equal affection repeatedly, before escorting them to their respective palanquins¹. (5)

Finally, after having gone through exchanging mutual courtesies and affectionate gestures, and with all arrangements in place, the entourages of Bharat and the king (Janak) made their departure from there (Chitrakoot) along with the entire paraphernalia and equipments that were present in their respective camps, such as well harnessed horses, decorated elephants, various means of transport such as vehicles of different kinds, and so on and so forth². (6)

[Note—¹The point to note here is that Lord Ram and Laxman met Kaushalya, Sumitra as well as Kaikeyi individually, and showed repeated personal respects to them by various courtesies such as touching their feet, bowing before them, comforting them by soothing words, and seeking their blessings. Their meeting Kaikeyi alongside the other two mothers, viz. Kaushalya who was Lord Ram’s mother, and Sumitra who was Laxman’s mother, and publicly showing respect to her sent a strong signal to everyone that Kaikeyi is to be shown due respect and treated on equal terms as the other two mothers, Kaushalya and Sumitra, without any discrimination, and that she must not be singled out for scorn and rude treatment because the people held her guilty of the mischief she had created, and the subsequent calamity that had befallen upon Ayodhya that had caused an unprecedented crisis that threw the whole kingdom into turmoil.

²We have read earlier that when Bharat finally decided to honour Lord Ram’s wish and return home with the Lord’s wooden sandals as a token of the Lord’s returning himself, he (Bharat) instructed his attendants to go forthwith and quickly make arrangements to wind up the camp, and prepare for departure as soon as possible. When these attendants went and informed the citizens to pack up and get ready for the road, a mighty wail had gone up, as everyone became extremely distressed at having to return home so suddenly without their beloved Lord Ram accompanying them. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 318.}

But since there was no way out, the people reluctantly started packing up. Remember: It was not a small tourist or hiker’s camp, but a sprawling mini-town of tents and temporary structures to accommodate a large number of people of two great kingdoms, Ayodhya and Janakpur, besides numerous horses, elephants, vehicles, servants and army-men, and all sorts of paraphernalia and equipments pertaining to different aspects of logistics, security etc. that obviously had accompanied them.

So, it must have taken some time for the entire camp to be packed up and got ready for the long journey back home to Ayodhya. When everything was lined up and the final signal was given for departure, Lord Ram personally bid everyone a tearful

and soulful good-bye—this is clearly mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 319 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it.]

हृदयँ रामु सिय लखन समेता । चले जाहिं सब लोग अचेता ॥ ७ ॥
बसह बाजि गज पसु हियँ हारें । चले जाहिं परबस मन मारें ॥ ८ ॥

hr̥dayam̐ rāmu siya lakhana samētā. calē jāhiṁ saba lōga acētā. 7.
basaha bāji gaja pasu hiyaṁ̐ hārēm̐. calē jāhiṁ parabasa mana mārēm̐. 8.

With Lord Ram, along with Sita and Laxman, enshrined in their hearts, the people moved along the road in a state of stunned daze as if they were moving ahead in a mechanical manner without being aware of their surroundings.

[To wit, the people were so sad and grief-stricken that their legs moved to-and-from like a piston of a steam engine, mechanically making them move ahead, without them being even aware of where their next foot landed on the ground, or the direction they were heading to, or the various sights that fell on either side of the path back home. The reason is that their minds were entirely focused on the memory of Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman, and they were lost in their deep thoughts remembering the Lord, and the countless sweet memories associated with him that these helpless citizens had cherished all their lives, and which they invoked now to use it as a balm to somehow and to some extent sooth them.]¹ (7)

What to speak of human beings, even the helpless animals were extremely distraught and gloomy. The oxen, the horses, the elephants and all other animals (such as mules employed to carry luggage and provisions)—all were feeling lost in their hearts, but they had no other alternative except to move ahead because they were dependent upon others and were slave to their wishes.

[When even human beings (i.e. the citizens), who are said to be strong and powerful enough to able to decide what to and what not to do, who have control over their actions and could stand up to change the course of history if they have the will and the courage to do so, could not defy the fiat of fate, the provisions of providence and the dictates of destiny as they had to meekly surrender to their fate of returning home without Lord Ram, them being unable to do anything about it, then how can these humble, poor and helpless animals, who were at the mercy of their lords and masters, do anything to the contrary? To wit, the poor creatures trudged along the path gloomily and sorrowfully, bearing their burdens on their backs under compulsion, while their hearts and minds were lost in the memory of their beloved Lord Ram, just like the case of the citizens who were themselves slaves to their respective destinies.] (8)

[Note—¹There is a sharp contrast between the mood of the citizens at this time, of departure from Chitrakoot to go back home to Ayodhya, with the time when they were getting ready in Ayodhya to go on the outbound journey to Chitrakoot. At time, there was cheer and enthusiasm, everyone was excited and energized. The very news that Bharat would go to Chitrakoot to persuade Lord Ram to return home had sent a wave of jubilation in the city. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 184—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 188.}]

There was hope and light at the end of the tunnel of despair—that they would bring Lord Ram back with them. Since the majority of the people had not visited the far-flung areas of the realm and had seen the beauty of Nature with its meadows, hills, rivers and forests, along with a wide variety of flora and fauna, the many holy places and pilgrimage sites, as well as the hermitages of many sages and saints, the journey to the forest to meet Lord Ram infused a spirit of adventure and exploration amongst the people as they would now get a chance to break free from the routine of a humdrum life in a city to go and see and enjoy the bountiful beauty of Nature in countryside. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 224; (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 235—to Doha no. 236.}

But the scenario in the present time was just the opposite—for as soon as the citizens were informed that they would have to pack up and return home, a general cry of dismay and grief rung amongst the rank and file of the two camps—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 318.

The people lost all enthusiasm and hope, and they trudged along the road mechanically like a lifeless machine geared to move ahead, with heavy legs, low spirits, bowed heads, taciturn mood, and minds lost in gloomy thoughts. The procession reminded one of a mighty army that never knew defeat, returning back from the battle-field after a severe setback.]

दो०. गुर गुरतिय पद बंदि प्रभु सीता लखन समेत ।

फिरे हरष बिसमय सहित आए परन निकेत ॥ ३२० ॥

dōhā.

gura guratiya pada bandi prabhu sītā lakhana samēta.
phirē haraṣa bisamaya sahita ā'ē parana nikēta. 320.

Finally, Lord Ram, along with Sita and Laxman, bowed before the holy feet of the guru and his wife (i.e. sage Vasistha and his wife Arundhati) to pay respect to the couple, and then the three returned back to the thatched hut in their hermitage even as they were overcome with a mixed feeling of sadness and joy¹. (Doha no. 320)

[Note—¹Indeed it is remarkable: “a mixed feeling of sadness and joy”—haraṣa bisamaya sahita.

Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman were sad because they were very overwhelmed by the immensity of love and affection that the people had for them, not only Bharat but each single person of Ayodhya and Janakpur had equal love and affection for them, and that they had to force them to return home.

The source of joy for Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman was that they would now be able to obey their father's commands as well as fulfill the mandate of eliminating the demons, that Bharat too was pleased and had agreed to obey the Lord's commands out of his own free will, that no tragedy had occurred while the two huge camps had stayed at Chitrakoot, that though the people were sad and gloomy, but all in all they too had agreed to let Lord Ram fulfill his moral duties and obligations before returning to them at the end of the designated fourteen years, as forcing the Lord to do otherwise would be against the principles of Dharma.

In a way, much was gained at the least or minimal of cost.]

चौ०. बिदा कीन्ह सनमानि निषादू । चलेउ हृदयँ बड़ बिरह बिषादू ॥ १ ॥

कोल किरात भिल्ल बनचारी । फेरे फिरे जोहारि जोहारी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

bidā kīnha sanamāni niṣādū. calē'u hrdayam̐ baṛa biraha biṣādū. 1.
kōla kirāta bhilla banacārī. phērē phirē jōhārī jōhārī. 2.

Then Lord Ram bid a respectful farewell to Guha Nishad who departed from there with a heavy heart that was full of excess of sorrows. (1)

The Lord then bid a warm good-bye to the many forest-dwelling people such as the Kols, Kirats, Bhils and others who were present there. They paid their respective respects to the Lord by bowing before him repeatedly, and then returned back (to their homes to join their communities)¹. (2)

[Note—¹We will recall that these simple-hearted and humble forest-dwelling tribals had helped Bharat to locate and reach Lord Ram's hermitage*1. After that, they had played a perfect host to Bharat and his companions by bringing eatables such as fruits, edible roots and stems for them, and they had also accompanied the people when they went out to see the sights of Chitrakoot, showed them around the place*2. They had all hung around to extend all support and help to the citizens in this alien land of forests and hills full of wild beasts and other types of dangers lurking in the dark labyrinths of the wilderness which was their home, and thus known to them like the back of their hands.

It is to be remembered here that when Lord Ram had first come to Chitrakoot, these Kols, Kirats, Bhils and other forest-and-hill dwelling tribes had come to welcome the Lord and offered their services to him, saying that the Lord must feel free to treat them as his faithful servants and order them if he needs anything. They had also offered to escort the Lord around the place and show him the sights of Chitrakoot. Then they had kept constant vigil around the Lord's hermitage and protected it against predators*3.

{Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, *1 = Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 224.

*2 = Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 249—to Doha no. 251.

*3 = Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 135—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 136.}]

प्रभु सिय लखन बैठि बट छाहीं । प्रिय परिजन बियोग बिलखाहीं ॥ ३ ॥

भरत सनेह सुभाउ सुबानी । प्रिया अनुज सन कहत बखानी ॥ ४ ॥

प्रीति प्रतीति बचन मन करनी । श्रीमुख राम प्रेम बस बरनी ॥ ५ ॥

prabhu siya lakhana baiṭhi baṭa chāhīm. priya parijana biyōga bilakhāhīm. 3.
bharata sanēha subhā'u subānī. priyā anuja sana kahata bakhānī. 4.
prīti pratīti bacana mana karanī. śrīmukha rāma prēma basa baranī. 5.

Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman sat down under the shade of the banyan tree in the center of their hermitage even as they were overcome with grief of separation and the memory of their dear ones, their family members, their kith and kin, and their dear subjects, all of whom loved the three very much. (3)

The Lord could not satisfy himself and have enough of it while praising Bharat's glories before Sita and Laxman as the Lord remembered Bharat's love and affection for him, his good nature, his excellent virtues and immaculate character, as well as his courteousness, sweet temperament, polite way of speaking, and wisdom. (4)

Verily indeed, the purity and immensity of love and affection that Bharat had, as well as the virtues of faith and loyalty towards Lord Ram that he displayed in his words, in his thoughts and in his actions—the Lord was so much moved by these glorious elements in Bharat's character that out of his abounding love and affection for the latter, the Lord himself extolled these virtues of Bharat in glowing terms, but the more the Lord praised Bharat the more he wanted to say something else in praise of him (śrī mukha rāma prēma basa baranī)¹. (5)

[Note—¹We have read earlier too that Lord Ram had lauded Bharat before Laxman when the latter had shown his anger at Bharat in the misplaced belief that he (Bharat) was coming to the forest with some ulterior motives. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 227—to Doha no. 230 (Laxman's anger); and (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 231—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 232.}]

तेहि अवसर खग मृग जल मीना । चित्रकूट चर अचर मलीना ॥ ६ ॥
बिबुध बिलोकि दसा रघुबर की । बरषि सुमन कहि गति घर घर की ॥ ७ ॥
प्रभु प्रनामु करि दीन्ह भरोसो । चले मुदित मन डर न खरो सो ॥ ८ ॥

tēhi avasara khaga mṛga jala mīnā. citrakūṭa cara acara malīnā. 6.
bibudha bilōki dasā raghubara kī. baraṣi sumana kahi gati ghara ghara kī. 7.
prabhu pranāmu kari dīnha bharōsō. calē mudita mana ḍara na kharō sō. 8.

During those poignant and sorrowful moments, the animals and the birds that lived on land, as well as the creatures that lived in water, such as the fish, nay, every movable and immovable entity of Chitrakoot, no matter how lowly they were—they were all profoundly affected by seeing the sorrowful condition of Lord Ram. (6)

Not only ordinary creatures of the mortal world, but even the gods, who are deemed to be immortal, were profoundly affected by the sorrowful condition of the Lord.

They showered flowers upon the Lord (to show their appreciation of the Lord as well as to respect the Lord who had willingly offered to suffer so much agony himself and cause so much grief to others just in order to oblige the gods and fulfill their wishes—which was the elimination of the demons).

The gods also became extremely remorseful and regretful as they talked about their own grief and pain (when they found Lord Ram suffering so much for their sake). (7)

When Lord Ram observed that the gods were feeling very remorseful and afraid (that they might have offended Lord Ram by their being so stubborn and playing mischief with Bharat in their attempt to stop Lord Ram from returning home, so that the Lord could go to the forest and eliminate their arch enemy, the demons led by their ferocious king Ravana), the Lord bowed before the gods (to show respect to the latter) and assured them that they need not have any fear (that their deeds might have annoyed Lord Ram).

Being thus reassured by Lord Ram, the gods went their way cheerfully. (8)

दो०. सानुज सीय समेत प्रभु राजत परन कुटीर ।

भगति ग्यानु बैराग्य जनु सोहत धरें सरीर ॥ ३२१ ॥

dōhā.

sānuja sīya samēta prabhu rājata parana kuṭīra.

bhagati gyānu bairāgya janu sōhata dharēm sarīra. 321.

Lord Ram lived in the thatched hut with his younger brother Laxman and Sita, the Lord's consort.

They embodied the three virtues of Bhakti (devotion), Gyan (gnosis; enlightenment; wisdom and erudition) and Vairagya (dispassion, renunciation and detachment) living side by side. (Doha no. 321)

[Note—Here, Sita represents 'Bhakti'; Laxman 'Vairagya'; and Lord Ram stands for 'Gyan'. But it should be expressly noted that this is not a water-tight classification. Bhakti can be said to be represented by both Sita and Laxman as both were devoted to Lord Ram*1. Similarly, both Sita and Laxman can represent 'Vairagya' as they had severed all ties from the material comforts of the world in order to serve Lord Ram.

The two can also stand for 'Gyan', which refers to knowledge that enables a person to see the truth behind a façade of falsehoods and false charms. This will be evident in what Sita says to Lord Ram while imploring the Lord to take her with him*2, and what Laxman tells Guha Nishad at Sringeripur*3.

{Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, *1 = Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 142 (Sita and Laxman serving Lord Ram devotedly).

*2 = Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 64—to Doha no. 67 (where Sita basically stresses on the duties of a loyal wife).

*3 = Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 92—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 94 (Laxman's advice to Guha Nishad has been universally acclaimed as 'Laxman Geeta', the words of wisdom as pronounced by Laxman).}

That said, what about Lord Ram? Well, come to think of it: the Lord embodies all these three virtues of Gyan, Bhakti and Vairagya in his own self.

The Lord is a personified form of 'Gyan'—one who is wise, enlightened and all-knowing*1. The Lord exemplifies the virtues of 'Bhakti' as he loves Sita and Laxman very much, and did his best to keep them happy*2. The Lord is an embodiment of 'Vairagya' as he was not tempted by the privileges and powers that come with the crown*3.

{Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, *1 = (i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 254; (ii) Doha no. 257 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it.

*2 = Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 142.

*3 = (i) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 41; (ii) Doha no. 165; (iii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 219.}]

चौ०. मुनि महिसुर गुर भरत भुआलू । राम बिरहँ सबु साजु बिहालू ॥ १ ॥
प्रभु गुन ग्राम गनत मन माहीं । सब चुपचाप चले मग जाहीं ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

muni mahisura gura bharata bhu'ālū. rāma biraham' sabu sāju bihālū. 1.
prabhu guna grāma ganata mana māhīm. saba cupacāpa calē maga jāhīm. 2.

Everyone— including the sages¹, the Brahmins, the guru (sage Vasistha), Bharat and the king (Janak)—was emotionally distraught and physically tormented due to excess of grief arising out of separation from Lord Ram. (1)

All walked along the road to Ayodhya with a taciturn mood, gloomily and silently, all the while remembering Lord Ram, and recalling and enumerating the Lord's countless glories and virtues in their saddened hearts. (2)

[Note—¹Who were the chief sages? Well, some of them have been mentioned by name, such as Vishwamitra, Vamdeo, Jabali*1, but besides them there were other sages too who were present in the combined procession of the people of Ayodhya and Janakpur. {Refer: *1 = Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 319.}]

जमुना उतरि पार सबु भयऊ । सो बासरु बिनु भोजन गयऊ ॥ ३ ॥
उतरि देवसरि दूसर बासू । रामसखाँ सब कीन्ह सुपासू ॥ ४ ॥
सई उतरि गोमतीं नहाए । चौथें दिवस अवधपुर आए ॥ ५ ॥

jamunā utari pāra sabu bhaya'ū. sō bāsarū binu bhōjana gaya'ū. 3.
utari dēvasari dūsara bāsū. rāmasakhām' saba kīnha supāsū. 4.
sa'ī utari gōmatīm nahā'ē. cauthēm divasa avadhapura ā'ē. 5.

[The following verses outline the speed with which the procession moved on the way back to Ayodhya, to reach the city on the fourth day of departure from Chitrakoot.]

The procession crossed river Yamuna and landed on the other side. That day everyone fasted. [This was the first day after leaving Chitrakoot.] (3)

On the second day, the procession crossed river Ganges. Lord Ram's friend (i.e. Guha Nishad) made all necessary arrangements for the people so that they can have primary comfort and their needs met¹. (4)

On the third day, the party crossed rivers Sai and Gomti where everyone took a bath.

Finally, the procession arrived at Ayodhya on the fourth day (from the day the procession left Chitrakoot). (5)

[Note—¹We can recall that during the outbound journey of Bharat to Chitrakoot, Nishad had made similar arrangements wherever the party had to cross a river. This was possible for Nishad as he was the chief of the community of boatmen, and his orders were carried out by his kinsmen very expeditiously.]

जनकु रहे पुर बासर चारी । राज काज सब साज सँभारी ॥ ६ ॥

सौंपि सचिव गुर भरतहि राजू । तेरहुति चले साजि सबु साजू ॥ ७ ॥

नगर नारि नर गुर सिख मानी । बसे सुखेन राम रजधानी ॥ ८ ॥

janaku rahē pura bāsara cārī. rāja kāja saba sāja sam̐bhārī. 6.

saumpi saciva gura bharatahi rājū. tērahuti calē sāji sabu sājū. 7.

nagara nāri nara gura sikha mānī. basē sukhēna rāma rajadhānī. 8.

King Janak stayed at Ayodhya for four days. During this time, he supervised and made necessary and proper arrangements for the administration of the kingdom¹. (6)

Then, after putting everything in order, Janak handed over the charge and the responsibility of governing the kingdom jointly in the hands of the chief minister (Sumantra), the guru (sage Vasistha) and Bharat.

Having done that, Janak made all preparations and departed for his own kingdom of Janakpur (also known as Tirhut). (7)

Meanwhile, the citizens of Ayodhya, both the males and the females, obeyed the instructions of sage Vasistha, and they lived contentedly in the capital city of Lord Ram (rāma rajadhānī) according to the sage's advice². (8)

[Note—¹Janak was a wise king. He understood his responsibilities well. With king Dasrath dead and Lord Ram in the forest, and everyone so sad and distraught that no one was in a proper state of mind to coolly think and look after the routine affairs of the kingdom judiciously, and the whole administrative structure was under immense pressure for lack of supervision and a decision-making authority, it was extremely important for Janak to oversee and put in place a proper administrative mechanism for smooth running of the affairs of the kingdom of Ayodhya before he returned home to his own kingdom at Janakpur.

Further, Lord Ram had assured Bharat that he had nothing to worry because he had king Janak and sage Vasistha to support, guide and protect him, which was a clear hint to Janak that he must now act as a fatherly figure to look after Bharat and ensure that he is not drawn into any inconveniences regarding the administration of Ayodhya because of his lack of experience and also because he was not in a proper frame of mind to govern the kingdom. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 305; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 315.

This is the primary reason why Janak had joined Bharat on his journey back to Ayodhya, instead of going back to Janakpur directly from Chitrakoot, so that he could first help make proper arrangements there and appoint observers who would report to him regularly of any major developments. Then, after fulfilling his moral obligations, king Janak handed over the charge to sage Vasistha, the chief minister Sumantra, and Bharat, and then left for Janakpur.

²Sage Vasistha was highly respected by the citizens. In the absence of Lord Ram, he was the senior-most authority in the kingdom, a guardian and an angel sage for the people. So they followed his advice not to lose hope that Lord Ram would certainly come back to them at the end of fourteen years. Time flies quickly, and very soon happy days would come back to Ayodhya. This assurance of the sage made the people live a reasonably happy life.]

दो०. राम दरस लागि लोग सब करत नेम उपबास ।
तजि तजि भूषन भोग सुख जिअत अवधि कीं आस ॥ ३२२ ॥
dōhā.

rāma darasa lagi lōga saba karata nēma upabāsa.
taji taji bhūṣana bhōga sukha ji'ata avadhi kīṁ āsa. 322.

The people observed austerities and kept religious vows such as fasting with the aim that as a reward of these exercises they would be able to meet Lord Ram once again.

They abandoned all sorts of enjoyment of material comforts and pleasures, even to the extent of not wearing any kind of ornaments, and covering themselves with simple clothing.

They lived an austere life somehow in the hope that the period of Lord Ram's forest dwelling would end one day, and they would be able to meet the Lord once again then¹. (Doha no. 322)

[Note—¹Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 86 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it.]

चौ०. सचिव सुसेवक भरत प्रबोधे । निज निज काज पाइ सिख ओधे ॥ १ ॥
पुनि सिख दीन्हि बोलि लघु भाई । सौंपी सकल मातु सेवकाई ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

saciva susēvaka bharata prabōdhē. nija nija kāja pā'i sikha ōdhē. 1.
puni sikha dīnhi bōli laghu bhāī. saumpī sakala mātu sēvakāī. 2.

[After king Janak left Ayodhya for his own kingdom, Bharat got to work in right earnest as narrated herein below.]

Bharat called his ministers (saciva) and attendants who were loyal, diligent and intelligent (susēvaka), and gave them proper advice.

[To wit, Bharat summoned senior members of the royal court and assigned them duties according to their abilities and position in the administrative hierarchy of the kingdom, and made each of them responsible for the work allotted to them.]

Having received their commissions and general instructions from Bharat, the ministers and attendants immediately went away to carry out the work allotted to them. (1)

Then Bharat called his younger brother (Shatrughan) and gave him necessary instructions, one of which was to entrust him with the responsibility of taking care of the mothers. (2)

भूसुर बोलि भरत कर जोरे । करि प्रनाम बय बिनय निहोरे ॥ ३ ॥
 ऊँच नीच कारजु भल पोचू । आयसु देब न करब सँकोचू ॥ ४ ॥
 परिजन पुरजन प्रजा बोलाए । समाधानु करि सुबस बसाए ॥ ५ ॥

bhūsura bōli bharata kara jōrē. kari pranāma baya binaya nihōrē. 3.
 ūm̐ca nīca kārāju bhala pōcū. āyasu dēba na karaba sam̐kōcū. 4.
 parijana purajana prajā bōlā'ē. samādhānu kari subasa basā'ē. 5.

After that, Bharat called the senior Brahmins of the kingdom, bowed before them, and joining the palms of his hands (as a gesture of politeness) he requested them as follows: --- (3)

‘Please do not hesitate in giving proper advice in any matter you deem fit, because the administrative affairs of a kingdom may involve high and low work, some good and others not so good.

[Hence, I prithee to keep a strict watch on the running of the affairs of the state machinery; please be vigilant and alert, and do not feel hesitant to advise me should some mistake be made by any member of the administrative hierarchy somewhere down the line.]’ (4)

Thereafter, Bharat summoned family members and the subjects of the kingdom, listened to all of them (if they had anything to say on any matter), gave them necessary instructions, and set their minds to rest and satisfied each individual by solving their problems judiciously (like a wise and compassionate ruler should). (5)

सानुज गे गुर गेहँ बहोरी । करि दंडवत कहत कर जोरी ॥ ६ ॥
 आयसु होइ त रहौं सनेमा । बोले मुनि तन पुलकि सपेमा ॥ ७ ॥
 समुझब कहब करब तुम्ह जोई । धरम सारु जग होइहि सोई ॥ ८ ॥

sānuja gē gura gēham̐ bahōrī. kari daṇḍavata kahata kara jōrī. 6.
 āyasu hō'i ta rahaum̐ sanēmā. bōlē muni tana pulaki sapēmā. 7.
 samujhaba kahaba karaba tumha jō'ī. dharama sāru jaga hō'ihi sō'ī. 8.

Thereafter, Bharat, along with his younger brother, went to the hermitage (home) of his guru (sage Vasistha), prostrated before the latter, and spoke prayerfully with the palms of his hands joined together. (6)

Bharat said: ‘Oh Lord, if thou be pleased and give me thy permission, may I live a life of penance and austerity (by observing religious vows and strictly conforming to the way of life of a hermit and a recluse).’

Hearing this prayerful submission of Bharat, the sage (Vasistha) was overwhelmed with affection for him so much so that his body became thrilled even as he replied to Bharat in an emotional voice. (7)

‘Oh Bharat, whatever thou wouldst think, say and do shalt be deemed to be a benchmark in the realm of observance of the principles of Dharma; it shalt be the essence of what Dharma stands for in practical terms; it would be a pivot of Dharma.¹’ (8)

[Note—¹Sage Vasistha had a very high opinion of Bharat as is evident in his response to Bharat’s submissions made earlier in Chitrakoot—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 257; (ii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 259.

Even Lord Ram had endorsed this high opinion for Bharat that sage Vasistha had—and this is clearly mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-2, 8 that precede Doha no. 259; (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 304; and (iii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 316.

The term “Dharma” stands for a host of good virtues—such as auspiciousness, righteousness, probity, propriety, ethics, morality, goodness of thought, action and word. What sage Vasistha means here is that whatever Bharat chose to do and say will surely be in accordance with the principles of Dharma, as he cannot do anything that is otherwise.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precede Doha no. 324 herein below.]

दो०. सुनि सिख पाइ असीस बड़ि गनक बोलि दिनु साधि ।

सिंघासन प्रभु पादुका बैठारे निरुपाधि ॥ ३२३ ॥

dōhā.

sunī sikha pā'i asīsa baḍi ganaka bōli dinu sādhi.

siṅghāsana prabhu pādukā baiṭhārē nirupādhi. 323.

Receiving thus his guru’s instructions and tacit support as well as his great blessings to fulfill his wishes to lead an austere life of penance and renunciation in accordance with the tenets of Dharma, Bharat called for wise men (astrologers) to determine an auspicious time and day on which he respectfully installed Lord Ram’s sandals (which he had brought along from Chitrakoot) on the throne of the kingdom of Ayodhya, with a lot of ceremony and pageantry. (Doha no. 323)

[Note—By installing Lord Ram’s sandals on the throne of Ayodhya, Bharat virtually fulfilled his wish of anointing the Lord as the kingdom’s de facto sovereign in a symbolic way.

Obviously, now he (Bharat) would be acting as a caretaker working on behalf of Lord Ram, till the time the Lord was away from Ayodhya. Even during normal times it was a common thing that when a king or an emperor went out on a long campaign, he would appoint someone competent to look after the affairs of the kingdom or the empire in his absence, and when the king or the emperor returned he resumed his duties as he used to do earlier.

Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 313—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 316.]

चौ०. राम मातु गुर पद सिरु नाई । प्रभु पद पीठ रजायसु पाई ॥ १ ॥
नंदिगावँ करि परन कुटीरा । कीन्ह निवासु धरम धुर धीरा ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

rāma mātu gura pada siru nā'ī. prabhu pada pīṭha rajāyasu pā'ī. 1.
nandigāvam'kari parana kuṭīrā. kīnha nivāsu dharama dhura dhīrā. 2.

Then, Bharat bowed his head before Lord Ram’s mother (i.e. Kaushalya) and his guru (sage Vasistha), and took royal permission from the throne where he had installed Lord Ram’s sandals¹. (1)

[So, what did Bharat do?]

Bharat, who was an expert and a steadfast upholder of the tenets of Dharma², got a thatched hut erected at a place known as ‘Nandigram’ on the outskirts of the city of Ayodhya, and went thither to live there a life of an ascetic². (2)

[Note—¹This permission was obtained by Bharat in a symbolic way by first bowing before the sandals of Lord Ram and then expressing his wishes. Since silence is a way of giving one’s tacit approval for anything that is proposed, Bharat obtained a silent approval, or we can say approval by default, from Lord Ram’s sandals to do as he thought fit.

We have read earlier that this principle of deemed acceptance or approval of anything by keeping silent on any matter proposed applied in the case of king Dasrath too when he is said to have ordered Lord Ram to go to the forest, for nowhere has Dasrath directly ordered the Lord to proceed to the forest in explicit terms himself, but his silence on the matter, and his not openly opposing or refusing to accept Kaikeyi’s demands, was deemed to be a tacit approval of the king of Kaikeyi’s demand for sending Lord Ram to the forest.

²Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 304.

The actual words used in the text are “dharama -- dhura -- dhīrā”. The word “dhura” means an axis or a pivot; and “dhīrā” means to be steadfast and diligent in doing anything. This fits in well with what Vasistha has said about Bharat just a

while ago in Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 323 herein above—that whatever Bharat does, says and thinks would be the essence of Dharma.

³This episode of Bharat going to Nandigram to live as a hermit during the time Lord Ram was in the forest has also been beautifully described by Tulsidas in his book “Geetawali Ramayan”, in its Ayodhya Kand, verse nos. 79-81.

Similarly, it has been briefly narrated in Veda Vyas’ “Adhyatma Ramayan”, Ayodhya Kand, Canto 9, verse nos. 70-73.]

जटाजूट सिर मुनिपट धारी । महि खनि कुस साँथरी सँवारी ॥ ३ ॥
 असन बसन बासन ब्रत नेमा । करत कठिन रिषि धरम सप्रेमा ॥ ४ ॥
 भूषन बसन भोग सुख भूरी । मन तन बचन तजे तिन तूरी ॥ ५ ॥

jaṭājūṭa sira munipaṭa dhārī. mahi khani kusa sām̐tharī sam̐vārī. 3.
 asana basana bāsana brata nēmā. karata kaṭhina riṣi dharama saprēmā. 4.
 bhūṣana basana bhōga sukha bhūrī. mana tana bacana tajē tina tūrī. 5.

He (Bharat) matted his hairs and tied them in a bun on the top of his head like done by a hermit or an ascetic, and he attired himself in clothes like the ones worn by them.

He got the ground dug into a shallow hollow, and arranged twigs and leaves in it to make a bed for himself. (3)

Bharat observed strict austerities and did penance like a true hermit or an ascetic. He used only such food, clothes and utensils as used by them; and he affectionately (i.e. willingly and cheerfully) observed vows and austerities too like them. (4)

He completely renounced all sorts of comforts and pleasures by discarding ornaments and royal robes, and abstaining from enjoying any kind of physical things that give comfort and pleasure.

Verily, Bharat broke all his engagements and attachments with such things of the material world like one would break a twig and throw it away. (5)

अवध राजु सुर राजु सिहाई । दसरथ धनु सुनि धनदु लजाई ॥ ६ ॥
 तेहिं पुर बसत भरत बिनु रागा । चंचरीक जिमि चंपक बागा ॥ ७ ॥
 रमा बिलासु राम अनुरागी । तजत बमन जिमि जन बड़भागी ॥ ८ ॥

avadha rāju sura rāju sihā'ī. dasaratha dhanu suni dhanadu lajā'ī. 6.
 tēhiṁ pura basata bharata binu rāgā. cañcarīka jimi campaka bāgā. 7.
 ramā bilāsu rāma anurāgī. tajata bamana jimi jana baṛabhāgī. 8.

The kingdom of Ayodhya was so glorious, prosperous and rich that it was praised even by the gods who lived in heaven (for they found Ayodhya as being more charming than their own abode in the heaven).

Even the patron god of wealth (known as Kuber, who is the treasurer of the gods) envied the wealth and prosperity of king Dasrath, and felt ashamed when he compared the latter's treasury with his own. (6)

In such a kingdom lived Bharat as a recluse, aloof from the physical things of comfort and pleasure as well as the pomp and pageantry that surrounded him just like the black bee (*carīcarīka*) that pays no attention to the fragrant flowers of the jasmine plant that are found in abundance in a garden filled with this species of flowers (*campaka bāgā*)¹. (7)

Verily indeed, in all sooth and without gainsay, devotees of Lord Ram feel so contented, blessed and blissful that they voluntarily discard all things of material charm, pleasure and comfort in this world as if one would vomit out something unpalatable or indigestible out of disgust for it (simply because the devotee finds no attraction in anything other than focusing his mind on Lord Ram as this grants him unbound peace, beatitude, bliss and happiness). (8)

[Note—¹This flower has an attractive, sweet fragrance and yellow petals, but it fails to attract the black bee which never goes to this plant to suck nectar from its flowers. Likewise, all the charms and attractions of Ayodhya failed to distract Bharat from the path of austerity and penance.]

दो०. राम पेम भाजन भरतु बड़े न एहिं करतूति ।

चातक हंस सराहिअत टेंक बिबेक बिभूति ॥ ३२४ ॥

dōhā.

rāma pēma bhājana bharatu barē na ēhiṁ karatūti.
cātaka hansa sarāhi'ata ṭēṅka bibēka bibhūti. 324.

Bharat was adored and praised by Lord Ram himself¹—so there is no wonder that Bharat would lead such a life as it helped him focus his mind and heart on the Lord, which in turn gave him immense internal peace and bliss, instead of getting distracted by the false charms of the outside world.

It is like the case of the natural habit of the Chatak bird (the sparrow hawk) that has taken a vow not to drink any other form of water except the drops of rain that the rain-bearing cloud drops directly in its beak.

Or it is like the case of the natural habit of the Swan that has a reputation of drinking pure milk and discarding all forms of adulterants added to it². (Doha no. 324)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 231—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 232; (ii) Doha no. 304 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it.

²The idea here is that it is a natural habit of a devotee of Lord Ram not to find any attraction in the charms of the external world of sense objects, for he finds them useless and distracting. All his desires of having an eternal and an abounding source of joy, bliss, happiness, beatitude and contentedness are fully met while focusing his

mind and heart on Lord Ram and in remembrance of the Lord, so he has no inclination or any reason whatsoever to look for them elsewhere.

This is a devotee's vow like that of the Chatak bird that drinks no other water except the drops of rain water, and it is a natural habit of the devotee of Lord Ram like the Swan which would naturally drink pure milk and discard all its impurities.]

चौ०. देह दिनहुँ दिन दूबरि होई । घटइ तेजु बलु मुख छबि सोई ॥ १ ॥

नित नव राम प्रेम पनु पीना । बढ़त धरम दलु मनु न मलीना ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

dēha dinahaum̐ dina dūbari hō'ī. ghaṭa'i tēju balu mukha chabi sō'ī. 1.

nīta nava rāma prēma panu pīnā. baṛhata dharama dalu manu na malīnā. 2.

[The following verses describe the severity of Bharat's penances and austerities.]

Bharat's body became thinner by the day, and though he progressively lost physical strength of his body yet the radiance and charm of his face remained steadily the same. (1)

His love and affection for Lord Ram continued to become more robust and firmer with the passage of each day, and the merits of his adherence to the principles of Dharma continued to accumulate day by day. His mind and heart remained ever virtuous, pure and holy, without any trace of any kind of taint ever affecting them and having the occasion to tarnish the sanctity of his inner-self. (2)

जिमि जलु निघटत सरद प्रकासे । बिलसत बेतस बनज बिकासे ॥ ३ ॥

सम दम संजम नियम उपासा । नखत भरत हिय बिमल अकासा ॥ ४ ॥

jimi jalu nighaṭata sarada prakāsē. bilasata bētaṣa banaja bikāsē. 3.

sama dama sanjama niyama upāsā. nakhata bharata hiya bimala akāsā. 4.

The conditions in which he (Bharat) lived and his own life can be likened respectively to the autumn season when the waters of lakes and rivers begin to decrease but when the sky begins to look clear and the lotus flower blooms¹. (3)

The virtues of self-restraint over the mind and the sense organs that Bharat practiced, the strict vows and austerities that he observed, the penances and expiations that he did for atonement and purification of his inner-self, the fasting and abstinence that he practiced—all of them stood in good stead for him and lend glory to him as they were like the glittering stars that are seen in the clear sky of the autumn season during the night.

[To wit, all these virtues of Bharat were like ornaments for him, and they resembled glittering stars that dot the night sky, making the canopy look beautiful and decorated with gems, small and big.] (4)

[Note—¹In this metaphor, the external environment in which Bharat lived, the hard penances and austerities that he did, are likened to the autumn season when, after the rainy season is over, the waters of lakes, rivers and ponds begin to recede and the environment becomes dry and crisp after the wet and damp days of the rainy season.

But his personal life, the internal joy and peace he got, and the satisfaction he derived from observing strict vows and austerities, was full of happiness and exuberance like the lotus flower that blooms during the autumn season when the sun shines brilliantly and there is no fear from the gloom cast on the earth by the dark clouds of the rainy season.

Likewise, Bharat's clear conscience, and the purity of his mind and heart were like the clear firmament seen during the autumn season when the dark clouds of the rainy season have gone away and the dust in the atmosphere has settled after heavy rains, as a result of which the sky appears spotlessly clean and bright.]

ध्रुव बिस्वासु अवधि राका सी । स्वामि सुरति सुरबीथि बिकासी ॥ ५ ॥

राम पेम बिधु अचल अदोषा । सहित समाज सोह नित चोखा ॥ ६ ॥

dhruva bisvāsu avadhi rākā sī. svāmi surati surabīthi bikāśī. 5.

rāma pēma bidhu acala adōṣā. sahita samāja sōha nita cōkhā. 6.

Bharat's firmness of faith (in Lord Ram and his words that he would return home at the end of the fourteen year period) was like the 'north star' (which shines at one point in the sky throughout the year)¹, while the time frame (of fourteen years) itself was like the day of the full moon², while the constant remembrance of Lord Ram was like the milky-way seen in the sky during the night as it stretches across the sky like a path from one end to the other³.* (5)

In this metaphoric or symbolic night sky, the love and affection for Lord Ram that Bharat had in his heart shone like the brilliant full moon, alongside its cluster of stars (represented by virtues of Bharat)⁴, in the autumn night. (6)

[Note—¹The 'north star' is used for the purpose of navigation by people lost in the wilderness. Likewise, firm faith in Lord Ram's promise that he would come home as soon as the fourteen years passed was like an anchor that helped Bharat to preserve his life and look for the day of the Lord's return. It helped Bharat's mind to stay calm and focused, for otherwise he would have been lost in the wilderness of countless doubts and fears of an uncertain future.

²The metaphor of the full moon night is used here as an imagery whereby just as the moon begins to increase in its brightness and its disc continues to expand step-by-step each night from the day of the dark moon till the day of the full moon, Bharat's hopes and joy continued to rise with the passage of each day and month of the year as the day of the Lord's arrival drew nearer and nearer.

³The 'milky-way' seen in the night sky is like a heavenly path on which the gods travel. It is illuminated against the general darkness of the night sky like a great avenue of the heavens. Bharat lay down on the ground in the night and gazed at this path in the sky, lost in the thoughts of Lord Ram, and hoping that one day the Lord

would arrive home along this path of the sky. And as we shall see by-and-by, Bharat was proved correct in his imagery because Lord Ram did arrive by the path of the sky aboard the Pushpak airplane from Lanka—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 4-a.

*Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 313—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 314.

⁴Refer to Chaupai line no. 4 herein above.]

भरत रहनि समुझनि करतूती । भगति बिरति गुन बिमल बिभूती ॥ ७ ॥
बरनत सकल सुकबि सकुचाहीं । सेस गनेस गिरा गमु नाहीं ॥ ८ ॥

bharata rahani samujhani karatūti. bhagati birati guna bimala bibhūti. 7.
baranata sakala sukabi sakucāhīm. sēsa ganēsa girā gamu nāhīm. 8.

Bharat's way of life, his thoughts and words, his actions and deeds, the profundity of his devotion for Lord Ram, his virtues of renunciation, dispassion and detachment from material world, his exemplary character and qualities, his glories and reputation—all were stellar and unmatched in nature. (7)

They were so stupendously glorious and profound that even the best of poets and bards would shy from making any attempt to describe or enumerate them (because they find themselves incompetent to do so)¹.

Verily indeed, even Lord Sheshnath (the legendary serpent with a thousand hoods and tongues), Lord Ganesh (the god who is very erudite, and a deity who is offered worship at the start of any venture for its successful completion) as well as goddess Saraswati (the patron goddess of learning, speech and wisdom) would fail to enumerate the glories and virtues of Bharat.

[To wit, when Seshnath, Ganesh and Saraswati find themselves incompetent to describe Bharat's glories, qualities, character and virtues, then say how is it ever possible for any human being to do so?] (8)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 233; (i) Doha no. 304 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it; (iii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 323; (iv) Chanda line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 326.

Refer also to: Geetawali Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, verse nos. 80-82.]

दो०. नित पूजत प्रभु पाँवरी प्रीति न हृदयँ समाति ।
मागि मागि आयसु करत राज काज बहु भाँति ॥ ३२५ ॥
dōhā.

nita pūjata prabhu pām̐varī prīti na hṛdayam̐ samāti.
māgi māgi āyasu karata rāja kāja bahu bhām̐ti. 325.

Bharat offered worship to Lord Ram's sandals daily, and the love and affection that he had for the Lord were so great that his heart failed to contain them (and they spilled over like a river breaking its embankment).

Bharat performed all his royal duties diligently by seeking instructions from the Lord's sandals on different matters¹. (Doha no. 325)

[Note—¹In this context refer to Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 324 along with its accompanying note that explains how Bharat did it.

Remember that Bharat had excellent advisors to help him make decisions, such as sage Vasistha, the chief minister Sumantra and other wise courtiers, as well as elderly Brahmins and senior citizens. He had expressly requested elderly Brahmins and senior citizens to be alert and advise him if they find something going wrong—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 323.

Besides this, Lord Ram had also advised him not to worry about anything because he had no experience of administration, for he had sage Vasistha and king Janak, along with wise ministers and the mother queen Kaushalya to guide him and protect his interests—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 315.

So therefore, Bharat would consult them regularly, and then sit down quietly before the sandals of Lord Ram, which he had put on the throne, to meditate and silently ask for the Lord's permission to carry out his duties in accordance with the advice he got from senior people.

In this way, Bharat was able to strike a fine balance between his life as an ascetic and the life of a care-taker prince, without letting one interfere with the other.]

चौ०. पुलक गात हियँ सिय रघुबीरू । जीह नामु जप लोचन नीरू ॥ १ ॥

लखन राम सिय कानन बसहीं । भरतु भवन बसि तप तनु कसहीं ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

pulaka gāta hiyaṁ siya raghubīrū. jīha nāmu japa lōcana nīrū. 1.

lakhana rāma siya kānana basahīṁ. bharatu bhavana basi tapa tanu kasahīṁ. 2.

Bharat's body was in a perpetual state of thrill as he remembered Lord Ram in his heart, repeated the Lord's name by his tongue, and had tears constantly welling up in his eyes.

[To wit, Bharat always remained submerged in the thoughts of Lord Ram and in its accompanying state of ecstasy so much so that his condition reminded one of an ascetic who has attained a state of Samadhi, a state of transcendental existence when the person rises above the plane of his gross existence in this mundane world and lives in a state of perpetual bliss and ecstasy attained in higher states of Consciousness. This eclectic state is called a 'Turiya-teet' state of existence in the field of Yoga (meditation) when the person concerned goes about his daily life work mechanically as if a man in stupor, for his mind is focused elsewhere. He would sometimes laugh and sometimes weep like a lunatic, but he is surely and definitely not a mad man!] (1)

Verily indeed, Lord Ram and Laxman lived in the forest to do Tapa (enduring hardships, doing penances and observing austerities to gain spiritual merit and atone for sins), but Bharat endured the same sort of Tapa even while living at home (surrounded by comforts that are natural in a homely atmosphere)¹. (2)

[Note—¹It ought to be noted here that the word “home” (bhavana) should not be taken too literally, for Bharat did not live like a prince in a palace, but like a reclusive hermit in a thatched hut outside the city of Ayodhya—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 323; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precede Doha no. 324.]

दोउ दिसि समुझि कहत सबु लोगू । सब बिधि भरत सराहन जोगू ॥ ३ ॥
सुनि ब्रत नेम साधु सकुचाहीं । देखि दसा मुनिराज लजाहीं ॥ ४ ॥

dō'u disi samujhi kahata sabu lōgū. saba bidhi bharata sarāhana jōgū. 3.
suni brata nēma sādhu sakucāhīm. dēkhi dasā munerāja lajāhīm. 4.

When the people compared the situation of the two brothers and their lives, they were unanimous in their opinion that all in all Bharat deserved the highest of praise in everyway¹. (3)

When sages and saintly people heard of the severity of vows, penances and austerities that Bharat had been observing, they felt shy and embarrassed; and similarly the greatest of sages and ascetics who observed Bharat's condition felt ashamed of themselves². (4)

[Note—¹What has been said in this verse is an extension as well as an endorsement of the observations made in earlier verses that precede it—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 324.

Both the brothers, Lord Ram and Bharat, spent their time living as a hermit and observing the strictest of vows and austerities. But what made Bharat stand out taller was the fact that while Lord Ram had little choice but to live a stern life as lived by a hermit in the forest because he had to obey the commands of his father who had to order the Lord to go to the forest and live like a hermit to honour a promise he had made to his wife Kaikeyi some time in the past, Bharat had no such compulsion. In fact, Bharat was supposed to ascend the throne in the absence of Lord Ram and live like a king as part of the demand that Kaikeyi had made to Dasrath*1.

But it indeed goes to Bharat's credit—and it presented a stark contrast with what normally would have happened if there was some other prince in place of Bharat—that he voluntarily shunned it, and instead opted to live a life of renunciation and detachment by observing the strictest of vows and austerities inspite of his being a care-taker prince who was surrounded by wealth and material comforts of the prosperous city of Ayodhya*2, as he could have easily enjoyed the comforts and privileges that come naturally with the authority he wielded and the position he occupied without raising any eyebrows.

The penances and austerities of Bharat were remarkable because he had voluntarily accepted them even though he had the mandate to rule the kingdom, a

mandate given to him not only by his father*3 but also by Lord Ram who had endorsed Bharat's appointment to the throne on two occasions*4.

Further, Lord Ram had the consolation of having his wife, Sita, by his side, but Bharat had broken all relationships with everyone, which meant he did not visit even his wife Mandavi*5.

So therefore, when the world compared the situation of the two brothers, Lord Ram and Bharat, it was unanimous in its declaration that Bharat won the trophy of glory and merit without doubt.

{Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, *1 = Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 28—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 29.

*2 = Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 324.

*3 = Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 31.

*4 = (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 41 (at Ayodhya); (ii) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 306; and (iii) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 315 (at Chitrakoot).

*5 = Chaupai line no. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 324. (We read in Baal Kand, Chanda line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 325 that Mandavi was married to Bharat.))

²These people, the sages, saints, ascetics and other souls who were supposed to have chosen to lead a humble and pious life dedicated to renunciation, detachment, observing austerities, penances and adhering to strict religious vows, became ashamed of themselves and embarrassed when they heard and saw Bharat's way of life and his observance of these virtues because Bharat not only surpassed them all in the strictness and severity of his religious practices but he had done it even though he was a 'prince' eligible to enjoy all the comforts and privileges of a princely life, unlike the sages, saints and ascetics who were supposed to live a life of total renunciation and strict austerities, but fall short of what is expected of them. Some of them establish hermitages and have disciples to look after their physical needs and comforts, whereas Bharat had voluntarily discarded such privileges although he was not only entitled to them but had them at his beck and call should he wanted to have them.

We have read just a while ago how stern a life Bharat lived—sleeping in a hollow dug in the ground and covered by rough mat of twigs and leaves, eating just enough to survive so much so that he had become thin and weak in the body. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 324.}

Frankly speaking, how many so-called renunciate sages, ascetics and saints who had proclaimed their detachment from the world and vowed to live a life of austerities and penances could say on oath that they would stand in competition with Bharat and win? The answer is: None. That is why they felt so embarrassed and ashamed of themselves.]

परम पुनीत भरत आचरनू । मधुर मंजु मुद मंगल करनू ॥ ५ ॥

हरन कठिन कलि कलुष कलेसू । महामोह निसि दलन दिनेसू ॥ ६ ॥

parama punīta bharata ācaranū. madhura mañju muda maṅgala karanū. 5.
harana kaṭhina kali kaluṣa kalēsū. mahāmōha nisi dalana dinēsū. 6.

Verily indeed, in all sooth and without gainsay, Bharat's character and the doings in his life were exemplary, pure and pious to the extreme. They are sweet, holy and pleasant to hear, and they grant joy and auspiciousness. (5)

They eliminate the taints, sorrows and the difficulties that one faces during the hard times in Kaliyug.

Bharat's life and the virtues he stood for are like the sun that helps to eliminate the great darkness of evil and delusions caused by attachments and longing for this material world and its sense objects with their attendant sufferings¹. (6)

[Note—¹Bharat's example shows the path to be followed by those who are tormented by the evil effects of Kaliyug, as by emulating him, one can find spiritual peace and solace by remembering Lord Ram and invoking the Lord's grace. Bharat's life of renunciation and austerities inspite of being surrounded by luxury is an example to tell us that we must also feel contented with whatever we get by the blessings of the Lord, and shun hankering for more material comforts, for true happiness and peace lies elsewhere. What is that 'elsewhere'? Well, it is in maintaining internal calm that is obtained by focusing one's mind on Lord Ram, remembering the Lord and being devoted to him, and doing our duties dispassionately and selflessly by seeking the Lord's blessings and offering the deeds which we do to the Lord, claiming nothing for ourselves as credit.

Adversities are a part and parcel of life, they come and they go, and the best and the easiest way to shield one's self from their adverse effects is to take shelter in the holy feet of Lord Ram and use the holy Name of the Lord as a buoy. This is what Bharat did, and set an example for all of us.]

पाप पुंज कुंजर मृगराजू । समन सकल संताप समाजू ॥ ७ ॥

जन रंजन भंजन भव भारू । राम सनेह सुधाकर सारू ॥ ८ ॥

pāpa punja kunjara mṛgarājū. samana sakala santāpa samājū.
jana ranjana bhanjana bhava bhārū. rāma sanēha sudhākara sārū. 4.

Forsooth, Bharat's life and his example acts like a lion, the king of animals (mṛgarājū), to overcome the evil effects of countless sins (pāpa punja) symbolized by a horde elephants (kunjara)¹, and they are able to calm down and eliminate (samana) all sorts of torments and mental sufferings (sakala santāpa samājū) that a person faces in Kaliyug. (7)

Verily indeed, Bharat's life and doings grant immense joy to devotees of Lord Ram (and spiritual aspirants) (jana ranjana).

They are able to crush the greatest of burdens symbolized by life in the mortal world (bhanjana bhava bhārū).

Bharat represented the essence of the nectar (sudhākara sārū) of the virtues love and devotion for Lord Ram (rāma sanēha). (8)

[Note—¹A single lion is able to defeat a large number of elephants by killing one or more of them by jumping on the victim's back and digging its teeth on the elephant's

neck. Compared to a lion, the wild elephant has a colossal body, but the lion's agility overcomes this obstacle.

Similarly, the single example of Bharat is sufficient to guide a person as to how to overcome the sufferings of Kaliyug.]

छं०. सिय राम प्रेम पियूष पूरन होत जनमु न भरत को । १ ।
 मुनि मन अगम जम नियम सम दम बिषम ब्रत आचरत को ॥ २ ॥
 दुख दाह दारिद दंभ दूषन सुजस मिस अपहरत को । ३ ।
 कलिकाल तुलसी से सठन्हि हठि राम सनमुख करत को ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

siya rāma prēma piyūṣa pūrana hōta janamu na bharata kō. 1.
 muni mana agama jama niyama sama dama biṣama brata ācarata kō. 2.
 dukha dāha dārida dambha dūṣana sujasa misa apaharata kō. 3.
 kalikāla tulasī sē saṭhanhi haṭhi rāma sanamukha karata kō. 4.

Had Bharat, who was brimming to the top with the nectar of devotion and love for Lord Ram and Sita, not taken birth in this world --- (Chanda line no. 1)

--- Who else would have set an example for sages and other pious souls to follow by practicing the most difficult of virtues of exemplary self-restraint over one's sense organs and mind, keeping vows, doing penances and observing austerities, and practicing abstinence, renunciation, detachment and dispassion of the highest quality¹. (Chanda line no. 2)

Who would have set an example for others as how to overcome and convert sorrows, grief, torments, sufferings, adversities and all other kinds of negative circumstances into boons that would grant a person good name and fame in this world². (Chanda line no. 3)

Verily indeed, who other than Bharat would have helped lowly and villainous persons like Tulsidas (the author of Ram Charit Manas) attain the grace of Lord Ram by showing them an easy path to the Lord by diverting their minds away from the world and focusing them on the Lord.

[To wit, had it not been for Bharat, who would have led by example to show ordinary creatures how to have devotion for Lord Ram and obtain the Lord's grace very easily; who would have set an example of what consists of having true love for the Lord; and how to practice surrender and submission before the Lord so much so that the Lord would himself feel obliged to bless the person concerned.] (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 233; (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 288—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 289; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 324; (iv) Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 325.

²If the reader recollects the episodes narrated in Ayodhya Kand of Ram Charit Manas and sees them with a bird's eye view, it would be easy to conclude that had Bharat not done what he did, had he not acted with prudence, far sight and wisdom by out rightly rejecting the offer of the crown, and insisting that it belongs to Lord Ram and would be his, had he not declared his intention to go to the forest and ask forgiveness from Lord Ram and try to bring him back, and then as wisely and prudently accepting the Lord's advice to act as a care-taker governor till the time the Lord returns home, and had he not installed the Lord's sandals on the throne to prove how sincere he was, and led a life of a hermit himself like the Lord did in the forest, Bharat would never have been able to remove the burden of ignominy, contempt and scorn for the rest of his life. The world would have accused him of usurping the crown surreptitiously by conspiring with his mother to banish Lord Ram to the forest so that he has no competitor. He would have faced the unsavoury and daunting task of ruling a hostile population, which might have led to a revolt one day or the other, for we must not forget the citizens of Ayodhya were very annoyed with Bharat and had shown him a cold shoulder when he returned home from his maternal uncle's place*1. It was only when Bharat declined to accept the crown and declared his intention to go to the forest to bring Lord Ram back that he became a favourite with the masses*2.

Hence, with wisdom and good sense Bharat had turned a hostile situation in his favour. What would have been ruinous for the whole family's reputation in particular, and the welfare of the kingdom in general, turned a stellar example of statesmanship and Dharma in practice. Bharat's penances and devotion for Lord Ram became a landmark, and his glories reached such a zenith of praises that even Lord Seshnath, Lord Ganesh and goddess Saraswati failed to describe it*3. Not only this, even the greatest of sages and hermits envied him*4.

Bharat became an object of unbound praise from a host of great souls, such as sages Bharadwaj*5 and Vasistha*6, king Janak*7, the guru of the gods*8, the deity of Prayag*9, and even Lord Ram*10. Bharat was called an embodiment of the tenets of Dharma*11 and a living example of devotion for Lord Ram*12.

{Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, *1 = Doha no. 158 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it.

*2 = (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 184; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 185.

*3 = Chaupai line no. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 325.

*4 = Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 326.

*5 = (i) Doha no. 207—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 208; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 210.

*6 = (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 257; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 258; (iii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 259.

*7 = (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 288—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 289; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 294.

*8 = (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 218—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 219; (ii) Doha no. 265—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 266.

*9 = Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 205.

*10 = (i) Chaupai line nos. 3-6 that precede Doha no. 208; (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 231—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 233; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precede Doha no. 259; (iv) Doha no. 304 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it.

*11 = (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 233; (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 238.

*12 = (i) Doha no. 207; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1 and 8 that precedes Doha no. 208; (iii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 210; (iv) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 258; (v) Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 289.}]

सो०. भरत चरित करि नेमु तुलसी जो सादर सुनहिं ।

सीय राम पद पेमु अवसि होइ भव रस बिरति ॥ ३२६ ॥

sōraṭhā.

bharata carita kari nēmu tulasī jō sādara sunahim.
sīya rāma pada pēmu avasi hō'i bhava rasa birati. 326.

Tulsidas says that whosoever hears attentively, with due reverence and faith¹, the story of Bharat (that narrates his deeds and actions, his character, his virtues and glories, his sense of renunciation, detachment and dispassion, his wisdom and devotion for Lord Ram, and the austerities, penances, vows and other meritorious deeds done by him)—verily indeed such a soul would certainly develop abiding love and affection (and devotion) for the holy feet of Lord Ram and Sita on the one hand, and develop detachment and dispassion for the material world and the charms of its sense objects on the other hand (as Bharat had shown by his example)². (Sortha no. 326)

[Note—¹It is of utmost importance to listen to the narration of Bharat's story with attention and focus so that its finer nuances could be understood and spiritual benefits could be had, for otherwise it would be a superficial exercise in futility.

This fact, albeit in the general context of the story of Ram Charit Manas, has been reiterated at a number of places in Ram Charit Manas—viz., (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 2; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 31; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 38; (iv) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 47; (b) Aranya Kand, (v) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 15; and (c) Uttar Kand, (vi) Doha no. 128.

²Refer also to what sage Bharadwaj has proclaimed with respect to Bharat's devotion for Lord Ram in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 207; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 209—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 210.

At the very beginning of the narration of Ram Charit Manas, Tulsidas has offered his respects at the feet of Bharat first, saying that he adores Bharat for his virtuous nature and devotion for Lord Ram, as well as for the austerities and penances and vows that he practiced which were unmatched—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 17.]

इति श्रीमद्रामचरितमानसे सकलकलिकलुषविध्वंसने

द्वितीयः सोपानः समाप्तः ।

(अयोध्याकाण्ड समाप्त)

iti śrīmadrāmacaritamānasē sakalakalikaluṣavidhvansanē

dvitīya sōpāna samāpta.

(end of ayodhyā-kāṇḍa)

[PAUSE 21 FOR A THIRTY-DAY RECITATION]

----To be continued in Volume 3, Canto 3, Aranya Kand ---

Appendix

About the Author

Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia left home when he was approximately 29 years of age due to an inner call of his heart that told him to devote his life in the service of his beloved Lord God, Sri Ram. Worldly attractions did not enchant him at all. So, he didn't marry, and after his father's death he came and settled permanently in Ayodhya, the holy town in India associated with Lord Ram.

Presently he works as an honorary manager of a world famous Kanak Bhavan Temple at Ayodhya, and spends his time writing in English so that the world can access the wonderful nectar of metaphysical, spiritual and devotional philosophy that is contained in Indian scriptures for which they are so renowned.

His English Books published separately by a reputed publisher of India, the details of whom can be had by contacting the author on his email given below, include: (i) The series on '108 Upanishads' in five volumes having eighteen parts, (ii) Veda Vyas' 'Adhyatma Ramayan' in two parts, (iii) 'Devi Puran Ramayan', (iv) Valmiki's 'Adbhut Ramayan', and (v) 'Biography of Lord Ram' based on Tulsidas' books.

Genre of Writing: Spiritualism, Philosophy, Metaphysics, Religious, Devotional and Theological.

The author's Books are available for order online both in 'e-book' format and 'paper-back book' format at following websites—

- (a) www.amazon.com (in their 'kindle' + 'paper-back book' versions),
- (b) www.pothi.com (in 'paper-back book' + 'e-book' versions),
- (c) www.draft2digital.com (in 'e-book' version).

(A) List of Books that are currently available as mentioned above :-

(A-1) (1) The Chariot of God: Dharma Rath; (2) OM and Naad; (3) YOGA—Its Practice and Philosophy according to the Upanishads; (4) Ram Geeta; (5) The Revelation of Creation—as envisioned in the Upanishads; (6) The Pentagon of Creation: As Expounded in the Upanishads; (7) The Triumvirate of Creation; (8) Maya: The Whirlpool of Delusions in Creation; (9) Surdas-Ram Charitawali; (10-a) The legend of Lord Shiva: Book 1 'Lord Shiva's marriage with Parvati'; (10-b) Book 2 'Lord Shiva's Sacred Hymns'; (10-c) Book 3 'Shiva's different names & their significance, Shiva Puran, Upanishads'; (11) the Mahavakyas of the Upanishads; (13) Lord Ram's marriage with Sita (based on Tulsidas' books "Ram Charit Manas", "Janki Mangal", "Ram Lala Nahachu" & "Geetawali", and sage Veda Vyas' book "Adhyatma Ramayan"; (14) "Anthology of Sacred Hymns, Stotras & Mantras of Lord Ram"; (15) "Vairagya Shatkam" of king-sage Bhartrihari; (16) An Anthology of the Sanyas Upanishads-Parts 1 and 2; (17) "Kaag-Bhusund Ramayan" or the "Aadi Ramayan" based on Tulsidas' Ram Charit Manas; (18) The Legendary Glory of

Hanuman; (19) “Narad Bhakti Sutra”—Aphorisms for Devotion for God and the Principles of Love for the Lord; (20) “Shandilya Bhakti Sutra”—Aphorisms for Devotion for God and the Principles of Love for the Lord according to the illustrious sage Shandilya; (21) “Bhakti Sutra Mala”—A Garland of Spiritual Wisdom in the form of an Anthology of Aphorisms pertaining to Bhakti or devotion, love and affection for Lord God; (22) Glory of Lord Ram’s Holy Name, Sacred Mantras, Stotras & Hymns; (23) Saints and Non-Saints: Their Distinguishing Characters and Qualities; (24) A True Guru (Qualities, Importance and Need of a True Teacher, Preceptor, Guide and Advisor); (25) “Sundar Kand” of Ram Charit Manas; (26) The Story of Ravana and the Epic War of Lanka—Told in Slow Motion (based on, and will have the full relevant Text of, Ram Charit Manas, Adhyatma Ramayan, Anand Ramayan, Geetawali Ramayan, and Kavitawali Ramayan); (27) The Great Ancient Sages, Seers, Saints and Enlightened Kings of India; (28) The Metaphor of the Hansa in the Upanishads: The symbolism of a Grand Swan used to explain the wisdom of spiritual and metaphysical principles by the Upanishads.

(A-2) Goswami Tulsidas Series: (1) ‘Dohawali’; (2) ‘Parvati Mangal’; (3) ‘Kavitawali’; (4) ‘Janki Mangal’; (5) ‘Ram Lala Nahachu’; (6) ‘Geetawali Ramayan’; (7) ‘Vairagya Sandipani’; (8) ‘Vinai Patrika’; (9) ‘Barvai Ramayan’.

(A-3) A full-blown English rendering of Tulsidas’ epic ‘Ram Charit Manas’, otherwise also known as the “Ramayana” according to Goswami Tulsidas. My English version of this Book is comprehensive and an elaborate one, as it runs into many thousands of pages that endeavour to explain each single verse of the Book ‘Ram Charit Manas’ in fine detail from different perspectives, with the aid of explanatory notes and references.

(A-4) Detailed English renderings, with explanatory notes and commentaries of the 108 Upanishads classified according to the Vedic tradition = 6 volumes; 18 parts. [Vol. 1=Rig Veda Upanishads; Vol. 2= Sam Veda Upanishads; Vol. 3= Shukla Yajur Veda Upanishads; Vol. 4= Krishna Yajur Veda Upanishads; Vol. 5= Atharva Veda Upanishads; Vol. 6= Vedanta Concepts explained with specific references to the relevant Upanishads.

(A-5) (i) English rendering of Adbhut Ramayan by sage Valmiki.
 (ii) English rendering of Adhyatma Ramayan by sage Veda Vyas.
 (iii) English rendering of Devi Puran’s Ramayan by sage Veda Vyas.
 (iv) A Divine Biography of Lord Ram & Glory of Lord’s Holy Name.

All the Author’s Books listed under (A-1, A-2 and A-3) are available as e-books and printed books on the internet at the following websites: (a) www.amazon.com; (b) www.draft2digital.com; and (c) www.pothi.com.

(B-1) Further, Books listed under A-3, A-4 and A-5 are available in Printed Book format from a reputed Indian Publisher as follows:

Name and contact of Publisher of above Printed Books listed under (B-2):

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Ansari Road, Darayaganj, Delhi—110002.

Phone: Mobile (Neeraj Gupta)—+919811133683

Office: 011-23286537; 011-32996391

Email: chaukhambapublishinghouse@gmail.com
chaukhamba_neerj@yahoo.com

(B-2) The following Books of Goswami Tulsidas listed under A-2—viz. Vinay Patrika, Geetawali Ramayan, Kavitaawali Ramayan, Dohawali, Parvati Mangal, Janki Mangal, Vairagya Sandipani, Barvai Ramayan, Ram Lala Nahachu, along with certain other Books (e.g. Upanishads Dedicated to Lord Ram, Shandilya Bhakti Sutra, Narad Bhakti Sutra etc.) are being published by the following Indian Publisher:

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